



TO: CONNECTICUT LEGISLATURE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
FROM: SUE O'CONNOR, PRESIDENT
GREATER MANCHESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
DATE: FEBRUARY 28, 2011
RE: GOVERNOR'S BUDGET PROPOSAL FOR CT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the more than 500 member businesses of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce I wish to share with you today our grave concerns regarding proposed cuts in funding to our State's community colleges. At a time when they are struggling to apply their limited resources to adequately meet the rapidly growing needs of the Connecticut business community and the middle and lower income family members they employ, and with a sweeping – and potentially flawed – reorganization of the entire State higher education system pending, we urge the Legislature to carefully consider the vital importance of our Community College system to our State's economic well-being, and the devastating effects that an inequitable distribution of the State's limited resources could have on our future prosperity.

Here in Manchester, of course, we are most familiar with Manchester Community College, having forged a highly productive socio-economic partnership over the last few decades among area residents, businesses, non-profits, municipal officials and agencies, and the administrators, staff and students there. And, without demeaning in any way other area Connecticut public education institutions, during that time - and I can speak personally for the last 20 years – we have found that MCC's flexibility and familiarity with area issues and institutions has allowed them to move more quickly and efficiently to address the emerging needs of our community. (Which, by the way, makes it especially troubling for us to hear that the reductions for community colleges in this budget may be greater percentage-wise than for our entire State university system.)

The GMCC will be addressing issues related to the reorganization in greater detail in a future communication to the Higher Education Committee. But let me sum up by saying that in Manchester MCC is even more than an important partner in our efforts to make Manchester a better place to live, work, and do business. They are a treasured asset.

As a community with demographics that almost exactly match those of the State of Connecticut in its entirety, let me make a few observations about the adverse impact budget cuts on community colleges will have on our community.

Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce – 20 Hartford Road – Manchester CT 06040
Phone: 860.646.2223 – Fax: 860.646.5871 – www.manchesterchamber.com