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Dear Councilmen,

I am honored to have the pleasure to testify before you this evening. On the subject of the Governor's budget proposal for the community colleges, I wanted to stress how it affects us community college students. In my senior year of high school I was accepted by the University of Michigan, the University of Bridgeport, and the University of Hartford. But ultimately it was the cost that was most important in my decision. Even with financial aid and student loans other options were just too expensive. You see my parents were in the middle of getting a divorce and times were hard. They still are. Even now my mother raises my 15 year old sister by herself.

Middlesex Community College has changed my life more than I ever imagined. I certainly never imagined I would become a Legislative Intern here in Hartford as part of my college education - an incredible experience! Without this school I wouldn't have met teachers that encouraged me to be successful or introduced me to so many different subjects. I would never even know about this internship, or have the pleasure to meet legislators or be familiar with the Legislative Office Building. Education is so important especially in such hard economic times. It is so tough to obtain a degree if a student can't afford school.

This plan would reduce the amount of money that flows into these community colleges on top of cuts that were already made in the last year or two. I am concerned this will mean less of the kind of teachers that have made such a difference in my life. I am concerned it will mean less classes to choose from, and less classes at times that will fit my work schedule. I am concerned there will be less of the services that especially help students who don't have other family members who have gone to college. Community college is a last resort for people like me who can't afford it.

My community college teachers and advisors helped me focus and be able to reach a GPA of 3.5. And now I just earned a scholarship to the University of Hartford for next year! Now I can afford to go to this school, only attending 2 years instead of 4, and with a scholarship, grants, and financial aid Middlesex Community College has made this possible. I am excited to attend this school in the fall of 2011, after I graduate from Middlesex with my Associate's Degree. I am excited to enter the work force as a Communications major and specializing with Political science. I hope to maybe one day work for your local CT-N network or even work with the FCC. This will be possible due to my degree, and my start at Middlesex Community College. Reducing the budget would make it less possible for future students to have the sort of opportunities that I have had. For their sake, I hope that doesn't happen.