

My name is Mackenzie Manning. I am a sophomore at the University of Hartford pursuing a dual degree in Economics and Politics & Government. I am from East Hartford, Connecticut and graduated from East Hartford High School. I am very involved in my campus community and the surrounding community through campus organizations and activities. I also work approximately 15-20 hours a week through my 3 different jobs.

State financial aid has made it possible for me to attend the college or university of my choice, which is the University of Hartford. I feel that the University of Hartford has the most to offer me. We have a small student to faculty ratio (14:1) and an average class size of 25. This semester I have a class of 6 students with the Speaker of the House of the State of Connecticut, Chris Donovan. These are things that only small private colleges have to offer. I chose the University of Hartford because of its small feel and great academic opportunities. Students who want to attend some of this state's great private colleges should not be discouraged from doing so. It is in these institutions where real learning and growth can occur in a place where students feel comfortable.

Because I receive this CICs grant, worth \$7,000 to me, I do not have to work full time. Working full time would hinder my ability to be involved in campus life and inhibit my academics. Cuts of this magnitude in my financial aid package would be disastrous. More of a burden would fall on my family just after beginning to recover from my father's sporadic unemployment throughout the past few years. If these cuts are passed through the budget, I, and many students like me, would be unable to pursue the college experience of their dreams.

If these cuts are to be passed I will suffer, students like me will suffer, private institutions will suffer, and big state run universities will ultimately suffer, which will cause the State of Connecticut to suffer. If students can no longer afford to attend this state's private institutions, they are going to turn to the state schools, which in the long run will over burden them and expand the budget in those areas. Perhaps, in another situation, students will leave the state in search of an affordable college experience. Neither one of those situations can be acceptable to our legislature or our governor.

As the economy was recovering and campaigns were in full swing last November, the focus was on education. Higher education is what is going to keep Connecticut's workforce competitive, it is what will attract businesses to our state seeking recent college graduates and creating jobs. The budget must be a reflection of standards and values. This budget says that the State of Connecticut does not care about its private universities and colleges, nor does it care about the thousands of students enrolled in them. This cannot be the message our legislators send to the students of this state, students who benefit from the CICs grant. These students grew up here, made it their home, and now want to get an education here. The state should be rewarding this, not discouraging it.

Connecticut has been my home for as long as I can remember. I intend to stay here after graduation to attend graduate school and eventually join the workforce. An investment in me and students like me would be an investment in Connecticut's future.

Thank you.