



Appropriations Committee  
Dr. Alice Pritchard, Executive Director  
Leader, Campaign for a Working CT  
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My name is Alice Pritchard and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF). CWEALF is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives.

For 38 years, CWEALF has worked to advance women's opportunities. We believe that extending, enhancing and the coordination of opportunities in education will improve the future earning potential of all Connecticut residents, particularly women and girls. I am here today on behalf of the CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) and the Campaign for a Working CT (CWCT) to urge you not to make cuts in the state's investment in the CT Community College System.

As part of a national effort, on October 8, 2009, the Campaign for a Working CT released a report documenting the need for middle skill jobs and job training: *Connecticut's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs*. The report confirms:

- Middle skill jobs are the backbone of Connecticut's economy. Forty seven percent (47%) of all jobs in the state require middle skills. These are jobs that require more than a high school diploma but not a four-year university degree. So this includes postsecondary experience such as an associate's degree, an industry credential, apprenticeship or on-the-job training.
- Only 37% of CT's workforce has the education and training required to fill middle skill jobs, in stark contrast to nearly half of all CT jobs requiring these skills.
- And this isn't just a momentary situation. 245,000 openings in the "middle-skill" job market are projected for the state by 2016. While the openings signal new opportunities for Connecticut's workforce to help the state exit the recession, the growing concern is that there will not be an adequate number of skilled Connecticut workers to fill these positions.

And, over the next decade - due to retirement and projected education attainment - the proportion of low-skilled workers in Connecticut's workforce is likely to increase at the same time that the percentage of middle-skill workers is projected to decline. This means the gap will only become deeper if something is not done about it. As a result we are likely to see grave shortages in critical occupations, significantly limiting CT's potential for a full economic recovery.

To illustrate the kind of jobs I'm talking about, they include police officers, fire-fighters, nurses, electricians, and truck drivers. These are local, hands-on jobs, meaning they are unlikely to be outsourced to other countries. Many of these are also good-paying--paying at or above individual median annual earnings for the state. They are also jobs reflective of the new economy, such as careers in advanced manufacturing and clean energy. CT's Community College System provides training for many of these careers through its credit and non-credit certificate and degree programs.

Clearly Connecticut – such as the rest of the nation – is in tough economic times. But as the state moves from recession into recovery, employers will likely once again face the challenge of finding quality middle-skill workers, which will slow the pace of economic growth. There are many employers going begging for middle-skill workers even in this economy. Eighty two percent (82%) of employers indicated in a recent CT Business and Industry (CBIA) survey that it was difficult to find qualified workers, especially in these middle skill technical and manufacturing jobs. This is not the time to make cuts to the CT Community College System which is helping to support the state's economic recovery.

Connecticut must ensure that its workforce has the necessary education and training to meet not just current but future labor demands. When we talk of “future labor demands”, policymakers tend to go straight to K-12 or high school to college conversations. Though these are important discussions, we need to take a hard look at the data on “who is CT's workforce of the future”. It turns out – based on population tables –that about 2/3rds of the workforce of 2020 are already in the workforce today--long past the traditional high-school to college pipeline. These adults are good candidates for middle skill jobs and the training offered through the CT Community College System (CCCS).

The CCCS has expanded its buildings and classrooms, student and business services and education and training programs to meet the growing demand of CT citizens for skill development. Now serving over 100,000 students each year, the CCCS is a vital part of CT's workforce system. The 12 colleges offer affordable, accessible training for both businesses and workers that address both current and emerging employment opportunities. CWEALF has been part of several CCCS workforce efforts including its four USDOL grants in healthcare, manufacturing and energy sectors. These initiatives are great examples of collaboration in support of industry in Connecticut, increasing student retention and success and building a successful trained workforce for the future. We are also working together to expand training opportunities for female students in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields and promoting more female faculty recruitment and retention in STEM fields.

Connecticut's economic success ultimately will depend on its ability to consistently produce a highly skilled workforce with the prerequisite basic and technical skills needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. The state must invest in training, education, and skills development programs for those in need of basic and/or technical skill development. The CCCS is critical to the state's success in training and retraining its workforce. ***I urge you to sustain the current budget for the CT Community College System and continue the state's progress toward economic recovery. We can once again be the most highly educated and trained workforce in the country with these strategic investments.***

Coming out of high school I did not feel I was ready to go to a 4-year school. Quinebaug Valley Community College was my best alternative and turned out to be the most worthwhile experience I could have undertaken. QVCC offered me the opportunity to grow, and learn new skills in an environment that caters to these very things. With smaller class sizes and an immense amount of support from the professors and administrative staff, I gained a continually growing knowledge to transfer to a four year school when I completed my associate's degree. I graduated from QVCC in 2009 with an Associates degree in Liberal Arts, and was accepted to the School of Business at Johnson Wales University in Rhode Island. I am seeking a Business Management degree with a concentration in Human Resources. I am also the Vice President of the Latino American Club at JWU. This would not have been possible had it not been for the opportunities and knowledge I gained from attending QVCC. Through QVCC I was offered a great classroom experience and support outside the classroom with the Learning Center tutors. The Learning Center was an invaluable asset to my experience, offering individualized tutoring in any subject I needed. The Learning Center is staffed by student tutors, which are selected based on their knowledge and abilities, as well as professional tutors. Having the Learning Center is an essential part of the support offered by the college and it could be adversely affected by budget cuts. Without these types of support-based programs, students would be missing out on the help they need to become better writers, more proficient in math and science, better at study skills, and more adapted to the college experience. The community college was also the most affordable way for me to attend college. I was unprepared for a 4-year college academically, but also financially. By attending a community college I was able to take the same general education courses as a 4-year college at a fraction of the cost. I incurred no student loans during this time. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for the community colleges to be able to continue the resources and support afforded to all that attend. I thank you for the opportunity to share my story and how the community college experience has helped shape who I am today.