Appropriations Committee

February 28, 2011

Testimony by

Grace Widmer-Santana

Honorable Senator Harp and Honorable Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you so much for granting me the opportunity to address you regarding a very important service.

My name is Grace Widmer-Santana, 6 Autumn Ridge Road, Oxford, and I have been a distance learning student at Charter Oak State College since I was laid off in 2009. As a result of my status as a student in Charter Oak, I was not only hired in January 2011, but was able to negotiate a higher starting salary. Through the Charter Oak Distance learning program I am about a year away from receiving my bachelors degree.

The program is aimed at adults who have very busy lives and wish to either get their Associate and/or Bachelors or degrees. The program helped me to navigate the often intimidating as well as confusing pathways from financial aid, counseling and advice on the courses offered as well as determining my goal and setting up a schedule to achieve it in the shortest time possible.

I was assigned a counselor who is available to answer my questions and she has given me very helpful advice on which courses would be best suited for my degree. The Charter Oak program helps students transferring credits from other schools as well as assessing what general educational requirements are missing and advising what courses are first to be taken to meet those requirements The courses are taught by very professional educators who are available as facilitators to learning.

I am hoping that this honorable committee would do its utmost to maintain and hopefully enhance the independent integrity of Charter State College. I believe it is this particular quality of Charter Oak that makes it extremely successful. Adults like myself ,need these kinds of affordable educational opportunities so that we can stay competitive in today's a market that demands persons with degrees.