Written Testimony
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee Public Hearing
March 10, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I wish to express my concern over the proposed Reorganization of Connecticut's System of Higher Education and the effect that it could have on the role and effectiveness of the Community Colleges throughout Connecticut.

I appreciate and understand the pressure caused by the financial crisis that we all face and applaud Governor Molloy's eagerness to make change and sacrifice for the betterment of all of Connecticut. However, when I read his speech on the budget and review the proposed bill reorganizing the system, I'm concerned that a good portion of the value brought to the citizens of Connecticut through the Community College network will be sacrificed.

Measurements of success are not the same for the two types of institutions. For example, it appears that graduation within a 2 and 4 year period is viewed as a benchmark for success in the proposed new system. I've been involved as a member of the Manchester Community College Foundation Board for well over a decade. Each year we celebrate some of the greater life changing achievements of our students and I'd be hard pressed to say that 50% of those students graduated within a two year period. Our Mission is different; it's ***a commitment to access, excellence and relevance*** to the community in which it serves. Access to education for those that can't afford the tuition of a state supported university or the commitment of time to achieve a degree within a two year timeframe. Will this access be overlooked for those who can? How do we insure that the needs of the students that require remedial help to perform college work or those that require part- time enrollment while working to support their families, or those already in the workforce that are looking to better themselves through further education are met?

The Community College system has been meeting these needs on a local basis for years. Already it appears that their needs are being sacrificed more so than those of the State University system. Using today's current appropriation, Community Colleges would sustain a 6% cut while CSU's would be cut 2.6%.

I'm not opposed to change and truly appreciate the budget decisions that must be made, however I believe that immediate change for the sake of change may have a detrimental effect on those communities and students that rely on the Community College System as a catalyst for improving their lives. I urge the Legislature to be cautious, gain the necessary understanding of the values of each system as well as the real savings that can be achieved prior to implementing radical change.

Respectfully yours,

Daniel R. Sabia
President
bkm Total Office

Board Member
Manchester Community College Foundation