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**Testimony for the
Education Committee
From
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Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges
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On behalf of the member institutions of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), I am submitting testimony regarding *Senate Bill 24, AAC Educational Competitiveness*. This bill would implement Governor Malloy's recommendations for reform in Connecticut's K-12 education system.

By and large, we think this is an ambitious but achievable agenda that, when implemented, will make significant progress toward closing Connecticut's achievement gap. We applaud Governor Malloy and Commissioner Pryor in their deep commitment to moving forward on these issues and pledge to work in partnership with them.

Connecticut's nonprofit college and university sector has nine teacher preparation programs, hosts or is involved with at least fourteen magnet schools and has students devoting untold number of hours to tutoring, mentoring and coaching in Connecticut's urban districts. We are engaged on this issue and will continue to be in ways that complement the efforts of the Malloy administration.

A few comments about the bill:

- Most of the teacher preparation program changes will be done by regulation rather than by specific statutory changes. We welcome a dialogue on these regulatory changes and hope that such changes will be made in consultation with relevant programs and in a timely manner. We have been bogged down for years waiting for the certification regulations to be changed. This has gotten in the way of true reform.
- We are particularly interested in finding relevant and streamlined ways for districts to report back to us information about our graduates. This will help us to be sure that our programs are producing high performing teachers.
- The move from a B- average requirement for admission to a B+ requirement is a significant change that will impact most programs. GPA is not the only characteristic that determines a person's aptitude to be a great teacher, grading policies and selectivity in admissions varies from campus to campus and certain endorsement areas like math and science tend to require

Albertus Magnus College, Connecticut College, Fairfield University, Goodwin College,
Mitchell College, Quinnipiac University, Rensselaer at Hartford, Sacred Heart University, Saint Joseph College, St.
Vincent's College, Trinity College, University of Bridgeport, University of Hartford, University of New Haven,
Wesleyan University, Yale University

more difficult courses. A change in admission requirements should include clearly detailed exceptions that allow the institution an opportunity to broadly assess an applicant on a variety of key measures.

- While the “Attract the Best Teacher” scholarship program supports the fact that our neediest districts need the best and brightest teachers, we have some concerns about how this program would work and whether the grant in the senior year would in fact motivate students to seek employment in priority districts. Often, our newest teachers struggle in the neediest districts and the students would be better served with more experienced teachers. Additionally, given the dearth of financial aid funding in this state, we think it is not a good practice to use aid dollars to support state administrative work as is contemplated by the 2% administrative set-aside for the administering agency.
- Our deans would like to be a part of the plan to encourage exemplary teachers to work in the state’s lowest performing schools. They should be seen as resources that could provide training and other support.

While overall we support the Governor’s education reform agenda and know that new funds are required to achieve this goal, we have concerns about the significant cut to the Connecticut Independent College Student grant program that is being made in part to fund these initiatives. The achievement gap at the K-12 level carries through to higher education in Connecticut. Our state’s minority attainment gap is the fifth largest in the nation. Financial aid is the primary tool available to help close this gap. Connecticut private colleges graduate minority students at better rates than their public counterparts, with equal levels of enrollment. ***CICS must be a part of the education reform agenda if Connecticut is to close its achievement gap at all levels.***

