



Office of the President

**Testimony for the
Higher Education & Workforce Advancement Committee
From
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Fairfield University**

February 28, 2012

Good afternoon Representative Willis, Senator Bye and members of the Committee. I am Father Jeffrey von Arx, and I am the president of Fairfield University and the chair of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges. I am here to testify on behalf of the sector against section two of **SB 28, An Act Implementing the Governor's Recommendations Concerning Higher Education**. This section exempts students attending institutions with more than \$200 million in endowment assets from the Connecticut Independent College Student Grant program (Yale University, Wesleyan University, Connecticut College, Trinity College, Quinnipiac University, and Fairfield University).

These six schools received approximately \$4.8 million in CICS funding this year. All of this money went to needy Connecticut students who excelled academically allowing them to be admitted to some of the country's finest colleges and universities that happen to be located in Connecticut. This money leveraged substantial amounts of institutional aid. In this fiscal year alone, the five that received a CICS allocation gave \$32,609,265 in institutional aid to Connecticut undergraduates.

We believe that the CICS program helps needy Connecticut students attend the academic setting that is right for them, that it helps to ensure that Connecticut's workforce is prepared for the jobs of today and tomorrow and that it is a direct extension of the needed education reform that is underway. The attached charts provide insight into graduation rates, industry cluster degrees in our sector, and minority enrollment. Connecticut is lucky to have such a robust independent college sector. It cannot meet all student and employer needs through its public sector and should be increasing rather than decreasing the relatively small amount of financial aid that goes to students at these institutions.

At Fairfield University, all 272 Connecticut residents who receive the grant would lose it under this proposal. Most of them are from Bridgeport, New Haven and Waterbury, 42 percent are underrepresented minorities and 53 percent are the first generation in their families to go to college. We provide the financial backing necessary to help 595 Pell grant recipients to enroll; 45% of whom are Connecticut residents. We cannot have our collective efforts to eradicate the achievement gap in K-12 education become a financial gap in higher education.

I must also note that last year, we graduated eighty students in engineering, bioscience and technology areas. Sixty-three percent of these technology graduates were from Connecticut. Over half of our alumni live and work in Connecticut. They are Connecticut's teachers, engineers, software developers and scientists. They are vital to the State's economic success.

Our endowment spend is already at its prudent limit and the bulk of the money we are allowed to spend

already goes into financial aid. We have made substantial cuts to many areas of our budget in an attempt to continue to fund the significant amounts of aid that our students now need. Cutting Fairfield out of the CICS program will hurt needy Connecticut students.

Independent colleges and universities are key participants in Connecticut's economic resurgence. We are market-driven and respond quickly to workforce needs while ensuring that our graduates are prepared to participate fully in our communities. Why not continue to fund a program that economically and effectively graduates such a large proportion of Connecticut's workforce?

Please oppose this bill and maintain CICS at this year's funding level.