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Connecticut Conference
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Testimony for the
Higher Education & Workforce Advancement Committee
From
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On behalf of the member institutions of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), **I am submitting testimony regarding two bills before you today.**

We oppose section two of **SB 28, AA Implementing the Governor's Recommendations Concerning Higher Education** and have concerns regarding section three. Section two of the proposed bill would exempt students attending institutions with more than $200 million in endowment assets from the Connecticut Independent College Student Grant program.

CICS funds students in need--not institutions.

- This cut will directly affect Connecticut students from middle- and low-income families. CICS recipients are needy kids from Connecticut going to college in Connecticut. These educated students are most likely to stay here after graduation thereby enhancing our workforce.

- Studies have shown that CT lags among its peers in degree productivity. CT needs its high school graduates to pursue higher education if the state is to have a highly-qualified workforce to meet the needs of the state's employers. Private colleges are far more productive than their public counterparts, especially the six institutions that would be eliminated from the program if this bill is to pass. These six schools have four year graduation rates of 68%-89% and six year graduation rates of 75%-98%; these numbers far exceed the average graduation rates for Connecticut's public higher education institutions: http://www.theccic.org/Customer-Content/WWW/CMS/files/2010_Grad_Rates-_CT_Schools_all.pdf. Further, eliminating six of the nation's best universities from the CICS program will only cause more of Connecticut's best and brightest students to leave the state upon graduating from high school and never return.

- In today's economy, the relationship between income and employment and educational attainment has strengthened such that higher education is far more important to the economic welfare of individuals than it has ever been. Add to that Connecticut's need for an educated workforce to attract the technology, bioscience and other employers that are the bedrock of our economic future.

Focusing on higher education endowments is bad public policy.

- Endowments are already being utilized to support the academic and physical needs of campuses as well as scholarships and community investments. They are under increased stress from the downturn in the economy as both earnings and large donations decreased and are only now starting to climb back up. Additionally, endowment revenues have already been called on to fund higher levels of need-based institutional aid than in the past due to the increase in student need since 2008.

- The legislature has recognized the critical need for college endowments by aggressively supporting growth through matching funds for fundraising efforts at the state's public universities, acknowledging that building endowments is the right thing to do for colleges and universities that cannot be run on tuition and fees alone.

CICS grants leverage other financial aid dollars.

- As the state struggles to maintain a balanced budget, the return on investment from the CICS program simply cannot be beat. The FY10 state cost per degree was only $1,349 at Connecticut's private colleges compared to $45,130 per degree in the public sector.

- The $23 million state investment in CICS leveraged an additional $55 million in need-based institutional aid that was awarded to CT undergraduate students.

Section three of the bill gives authority to the Office of Financial & Academic Affairs to collect any data it deems necessary for purposes of reporting on higher education matters. This unfettered grant of power flies in the face of a careful approach to data collection in which the data questions and other policies are determined upfront. As noted in Fordham Law School's Center on Law and Information Policy's seminal research on student databases,

- The collection of information by the state should be minimized and specifically tied to an articulated audit or evaluation purpose;

- Clear data retention policies should be instituted and made mandatory;

- Access and permissible use policies should be well articulated and specific in nature.

Data breaches do take place, even at institutions that adopt rules and procedures for use and care of data, as evidenced by the recent exposure of student information at Central Connecticut State University. We believe that authority to collect data should only be given in limited and specific ways.

Raised Bill 237--***AN ACT CONCERNING THE SHARING OF INFORMATION BETWEEN THE LABOR DEPARTMENT AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.***

This bill allows the Department of Labor to share wage and employment data with institutions of higher education for purposes of program evaluation. It would help colleges and universities to determine how their graduates are faring in Connecticut.