

**Written Testimony for the
Higher Education & Workforce Advancement Committee
From
Brittany E. Kaplan**

March 6, 2012

Dear Distinguished members of the Higher Education and Workforce Advancement Committee,

My name is Brittany Kaplan, and I am writing to you today in support of **H.B. 5362 An Act Concerning a Deduction from the Personal Income Tax for Student Loan Interest**. I am currently a junior pursuing a Bachelors degree in Political Science at the University of Connecticut-Storrs. I chose to transfer to the the University of Connecticut after attending Manchester Community College not only for the renowned education it would provide, but also for its affordability. The rising cost of higher education is a growing concern for myself, and my fellow students. In the next four years UConn is planning a 24% increase on the price of tuition, and this is unfortunately a trend in public education, with the average yearly tuition of a four year public university increasing by around 5% each year for the last ten years.

The rising cost of college is a problem in and of itself, but when combined with the poor economy, it creates an incredible burden on graduating students. For the first time in the US, student loan debt has surpassed credit card debt, which is a testament to the financial situation of college students today. The tax relief that H.B 5362 would create will be invaluable to students as they struggle to find employment and pay back students loans that may take them decades to do. For me personally, figuring out how to pay for college has been a challenge. I am one of five children as well as the first person in my immediate family to attend college. Last year my mother underwent two back surgeries and is unable to work, and combined with my step-father who is a retired military veteran, my family has a combined income of less than \$50,000 a year. I am dependent on student loans to attain my education, it would be nearly impossible for me finance my education otherwise, and I know there are many students who are in the same situation. Just as I have had to do, every single one of my friends work part time jobs and have to take out loans to make ends meet as well.

As myself and my fellow students reach the end of our undergraduate career, some of us will go to graduate school or enter the job market where many will be unable to find employment and the student loans we depended on in college will have to be paid whether we have a steady income or not. By enabling students to claim student loan interest on our state income taxes, the burden of affording our education will be lightened, which in a time where it has been ever increasing, will be a welcome relief.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony, and I hope you support H.B 5362 as well,

Brittany Kaplan