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**Written Testimony for the
Higher Education & Workforce Advancement Committee
From
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Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges
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H.B. No. 5362 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A DEDUCTION FROM THE PERSONAL INCOME TAX FOR STUDENT LOAN INTEREST.

The bill would create an income tax deduction of up to \$2500 annually for single filers with income under \$75,000 and joint filers with income under \$150,000. The deduction would cover interest paid on student loans. Student loan debt is skyrocketing as federal and state aid programs are cut or level funded. This would be a relatively simple way to help families to reduce the debt burden.

H.B. No. 5031 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES.

While we do not oppose the reporting and training outlined in this bill, we are not sure that the bill is needed because it incorporates existing practice.

Currently, all colleges are subject to Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act. The Act mandates that colleges and universities must annually file a Campus Security Report with the federal government and must make the report available to students and employees. This report must include crime statistics for the prior three years, policy statements regarding various safety and security measures, campus crime prevention program descriptions, and procedures to be followed in the investigation and prosecution of alleged sexual offenses.

Additionally, campuses have behavioral codes of conduct and campus judicial processes that cover sexual violence. They also incorporate into new student orientation programs training on matters of sexual violence.

As an example, Fairfield University's policy defines the act(s) that constitute assault, gives guidance to victims of sexual violence, describes the judicial processes for addressing assaults, and gives students information regarding internal and external resources (including the State Victim Advocate office) that are in place to assist victims of sexual violence. A specific sub unit of its judicial board system receives training through

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

CONNSACs and has specific jurisdiction to hear sexual assault cases (along with harassment and discrimination cases that may arise on campus).

The University of Bridgeport includes in its definitions of unacceptable behavior, “sexual assault, actual or threatened, defined as including, but not limited to, unwanted sexual touching, even between acquaintances, C) verbal or physical abuse, coercion and/or other conduct which threatens or endangers the health and/or safety of any person, this includes assault which takes place during hazing of any kind.” It defines sexual harassment as “unwelcoming sexual conduct or advances related to any condition of employment, evaluation or student performance, including, but not limited to, unwarranted sex-related comments, sexually explicit comments or graphics, unwelcome touching, derogatory jokes based upon sex, using crude or offensive language, spreading rumors about a person’s sexuality, placing a compromising photograph on the web, or ogling.” The policy also outlines internal and external processes and resources for victims to access.

Colleges and universities take these issues seriously and work with students to recognize inappropriate behavior and to support students who are the victims of sexual violence.