



Office of the President

**Testimony for the
Higher Education & Workforce Advancement Committee
From
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March 19, 2013

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 testimony in support of the concept raised by **SB 1139, An Act Concerning Changes to Program Approval for Private Colleges**. We do not support the language as written. We do, however, fully support the concept of reducing regulation of independent college academic programs.

Connecticut's program approval process for the non-profit independent higher education sector is different and more restrictive than in most other states. Data collected by CCIC show that thirty-six states have no regulatory authority over the approval of academic programs offered by private non-profit independent colleges. Of the 14 that do regulate such programs, the process is streamlined or the majority of non-profit institutions are exempted.

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. We work each day to ensure that Connecticut's workforce is prepared for the jobs of today and tomorrow and strive to have relevant academic offerings that build on the foundation of a strong liberal arts background.

The current approval process is burdensome, costly, time consuming and weakens an institution's capacity to be responsive to the economic needs of the state. Additionally, it comes at the end of a lengthy internal campus process that considers academic, financial and market issues before a determination is made whether to move forward with an academic offering.

We are happy to report that we are engaged in positive discussions with the Malloy administration to revise this process and hope that you will adopt what comes out of that reasoned process.