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**Testimony for the
Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee
Judith B. Greiman
Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges
March 11, 2014**

On behalf of the member institutions of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), **I am testifying in favor of a revised H.B. No. 5468 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT SCHOLARSHIPS.** We believe that changes should be made to the Governor's Scholarship Program to make it more responsive to student needs.

We spent time this fall talking to our financial aid directors to see how implementation of the new program was going. While it was obviously a significant change from the long-standing way of doing things, we found that campus representatives were thoughtful in determining what would be the most important fixes from a student perspective. The changes that we seek include:

Allow for the EFC (expected family contribution) to be determined at a fixed date and time for the year. This is what is done in the Pell Grant program. Possible language: "Student eligibility shall be based on family contribution estimated as of June 30 of each year."

Grant financial aid directors some flexibility by allowing them to award UP TO the maximum grant award that is set for the need-based grants. The Governor's Scholarship Program (GSP) provides for no flexibility at the institutional level for the purpose of implementation. The previous CIGGS and CAPCS programs left it up to the financial aid directors to determine the award amount for each student, up to a maximum amount based on a formula, as long as the students showed financial need. The GSP has a rigid award matrix that pre-determines the award amounts. The award amounts of \$2,000, \$2,500, or \$3,000 depending on where a student's EFC falls between \$0-11,000 are far less than was previously allowed and, there is no flexibility to award less than or more than these pre-set amounts. Aid directors who do not have enough money to cover all eligible students have struggled with the fact that they are precluded from helping more students by spreading out the money or from helping an eligible student who needs somewhat less or more than the set amount.

It was our understanding when legislative amendments to the program were made last year that this body wanted to see this flexibility instituted. We have been told that the Office of Higher Education has determined these set award amounts in an effort to bring consistency such that eligible students will know what they are to receive. This is just not how the program was funded, however, and no eligible student knows what he or she will receive. In other words, if the GSP were an entitlement program, fully funded so every eligible student was guaranteed an award, this concept of each student knowing the amount in advance would be met. That is not what was done; therefore, students do not know and this rationale for the set award amount is not viable.

As an example, a student with an EFC of \$8,000 who applies early in the process may receive the \$2,000 award she was eligible to receive but another student who applies slightly later in the process, with a \$1,000 EFC may receive nothing even though she's eligible for a \$3,000 award because the pot of money that the institution has received has run out. Another example is that a student who receives the grant at one college may transfer to another and not receive the

Albertus Magnus College, Connecticut College, Fairfield University, Goodwin College, Mitchell College,
Quinnipiac University, Rensselaer at Hartford, Sacred Heart University, St. Vincent's College, Trinity College, University of Bridgeport,
University of Hartford, University of New Haven, University of Saint Joseph, Wesleyan University, Yale University

grant because that second school has spent its allocation. Many students and many legislators heard that the program would offer any eligible student the same award but that is just not the case, accordingly, aid directors should be allowed to use their professional judgment within the bounds of the established EFC maximum to award more flexible amounts up to an established maximum.

Increase the maximum need-based aid grants that may be awarded to at least \$4000 for full-time students and \$1,000 for part-time students. The maximums were set quite low (\$250, \$500 for part-time students and \$2000, \$2500 or \$3000 for full-time students). The part-time amounts do little to motivate students as they are just too insignificant as compared to tuition and related expenses. Additionally, most students who attend part-time do so because of financial or family concerns and many are the very adult learners that Connecticut must educate to enable us to fill our workforce needs. A grant up to \$1000 would be more appropriate for this population. The CICS grant maximum used to be \$7500. The \$2000-\$3000 is far lower and does not go as far in helping this needy population to meet its college cost needs. A modest increase to \$1000 and \$4000 would be more appropriate.

One way to put a reasonable maximum in statute without listing a dollar amount that would need to be changed in the future is to tie the maximum dollar amount to some pre-determined factor like the maximum Pell award or a formula. For example, tie the “up to” grant amount either to a portion of the General Fund cost per full-time equivalent student at The University of Connecticut, as it used to be determined in section 10a-39 or tie it to the maximum or a percentage of the maximum Federal Pell Grant award amount. For this year that is \$5,645. For the 2014–15 award year (July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015), the maximum award will be \$5,730. Either method would put a limit to the grant without putting an actual number in statute.

Reduce the administrative burden on financial aid directors and confusion for students by eliminating the cliffs/steps that were built into the program. These cliffs create the need to monitor constantly, result in money being taken back from needy students and serve no policy purpose:

- Part-Time status should be defined as students with an EFC of below \$11,000 who take less than 12 credits.
- Full-Time status should be defined as students with an EFC of below \$11,000 who take 12 or more credits.

Allow students to receive both the need-based and the need/merit components of the GSP so as to allow the best and brightest needy students to receive both as they were able to do in the past. These are the very students who should be rewarded and who are recruited by colleges in other states. We should do all that we can to encourage them to stay in Connecticut.

We look forward to working with the Committee and the Malloy Administration to make sure that the program is run as effectively as possible and that the increased funds are well spent. We are thrilled that Governor Malloy has proposed an increase to the program and believe that it is vital to our state’s future economic security and to ensuring an educated workforce.