



## **State of Connecticut**

**African-American Affairs Commission**

**State Capitol**

**210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509**

**Hartford, CT 06106**

**860-240-8555**

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis, Senator Flexer, Representative Lopes, Senator Witkos and Representative Betts and other members of the Higher Education and Employee Advancement Committee.

My name is Subira Gordon and I am the legislative analyst for the African American Affairs Commission. The mission of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) is to improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut.

I am writing to offer support for HB 6768 AA Clarifying that private occupational schools function as post-secondary schools, HB 6767 AAC the approval and authorization of private occupational schools and HB 6117 AAC the use of digital open-source textbooks in higher education.

I would like to thank the committee for starting to conversation about private occupational schools. These bills do provide a good start around protections regarding occupational schools, but more needs to be done about for-profit schools more broadly. We would like to see more steps taken to protect Connecticut's students from bad acts and bad debt generated by deceptive for-profit colleges and occupational schools. While for-profit schools purport to provide greater access to education for non-traditional students seeking better job opportunities, they often fail to deliver on these outcomes, engaging in questionable marketing and recruiting tactics and charging excessive fees in the process. For-

profit schools typically leave vulnerable student borrowers with unmanageable levels of debt, particularly students of color and our veterans.

Various reports and news articles document that students of for-profit schools are often left worse-off financially than when they enrolled. Attendees at for-profit schools are more likely to leave school without a certificate or degree than students attending other schools.<sup>i</sup> Even when they do obtain a degree or certificate, students often find they are unable to obtain employment in their fields of study due to lack of proper accreditation or other eligibility issues<sup>ii</sup> or because employers refuse to hire graduates from the schools due to inadequate training or preparation.<sup>iii</sup> Actions brought by state Attorneys General, including the Connecticut Attorney General's office, show that for-profit schools engage in deceptive and misleading marketing and recruiting tactics in order to enroll as many students as possible, promising good jobs, internships, and quality education but then failing to deliver after enrollment.<sup>iv</sup>

Students of color are particularly vulnerable to the harms caused by for-profit schools. African American and Latino students are more likely to attend for-profit schools than white students.<sup>v</sup> They also pay more to attend such schools, have more debt, and are less likely to graduate than their counterparts at other schools.<sup>vi</sup> Significantly, 80% of African-American and two-thirds of Latino students do not complete for-profit programs.<sup>vii</sup> As a result, they are more likely to struggle to pay back their loans than their counterparts who attended other schools.<sup>viii</sup>

Next I would like to support HB 6117, this proposal will make open source textbooks available for use in Connecticut institutions of higher education. The ever increasing costs of text books affect the cost of education for many students. The AAAC fully supports any efforts that will make access to college and the materials needed for higher education more easily accessible for all students.

I would like to thank you the opportunity to testify.

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<sup>i</sup> Smith & Parrish.

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<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. (2012). For profit higher education: The failure to safeguard the federal investment and ensure student success. Available at [http://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/for\\_profit\\_report/PartI.pdf](http://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/for_profit_report/PartI.pdf).

<sup>iii</sup> State Attorneys General. (2014). Letter to Senator Durbin and Representative Cummings. Available at [http://ag.ky.gov/pdf\\_news/s2204-letter.pdf](http://ag.ky.gov/pdf_news/s2204-letter.pdf).

<sup>iv</sup> Id.

<sup>v</sup> Smith & Parrish.

<sup>vi</sup> Center for Responsible Lending, et al. (2014). Gainful employment: A civil rights perspective. Available at <http://www.responsiblelending.org/student-loans/research-policy/2014-Gainful-Employment-A-Civil-Rights-Perspective-Oct.pdf>.

<sup>vii</sup> Smith & Parrish.

<sup>viii</sup> Id.