



CONNECTICUT STATE
COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES
BOARD OF REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Testimony by Dr. David L Levinson
Vice President of Community Colleges
Board of Regents for Higher Education
Before the Legislative Program Review and
Investigations Committee
February 27, 2015

Good afternoon, Senator Fonfara, Representative Carpino and members of the committee.

For the record, I am David L. Levinson, Vice President of Community Colleges for the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) and President of Norwalk Community College. With me today are community college deans Vicki Bozzuto of Gateway, Ann Branchini and Marge Valentin both of Three Rivers, Denise Bukovan of Housatonic, Melanie Haber of Manchester, Laurie Hornbecker of Naugatuck Valley, and Eileen Peltier of Asnuntuck. Also with us are Corby Coperthwaite, Jane Williams and Brenda Zanta all with the Board of Regents.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on **Senate Bill 973, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning Higher Education Certificate Programs**. As you correctly emphasize in your report, credit and non-credit certificate programs represent important pathways to employment. Whereas historically these programs have operated in the shadows of associate degree programs in community colleges nationwide, the work of the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workplace (cited in your report) and research by the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University underscore the primacy of certificate programs for employability.

First and foremost, we are committed to assuring that information available about certificate programs to all Connecticut residents is clear, transparent, and fully discloses all costs and fees associated with completion. This includes information wherever relevant about licensure, employment projections, and any other material that will help prospective students decide on whether to pursue a particular programmatic pathway.

As you are aware, our community colleges are united under the governance of the Board of Regents for Higher Education. While part of this unifying structure, our colleges are primarily responsive to their local catchment areas, which differ demographically, occupationally, and geographically. Similarly, the certificate programs that each of the colleges offer correspond to local needs, which vary considerably throughout the state.

While we strive for uniformity, there are and will be differences among the colleges. Due to variations in regional costs, pricing may differ. Ongoing negotiations with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) regarding representation of non-credit faculty may also have an impact on salary costs at some or all of our institutions. Also, some of our colleges offer non-credit and credit options for courses and programs, which will also create variances in costs and prices.

As for tracking program outcomes, this is something that the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities have begun to do in a more uniform manner under the guidance of the Board of Regents (BOR). In addition we are developing tracking mechanisms for students in all of our programs and we plan to issue a preliminary report by the end of this calendar year.

There is currently no comprehensive reporting system that captures all of the data proposed by section two of this legislation, which includes but is not limited to median loan debt incurred by students, average length of time for completion, and pass rate for industry licensure and certification. While recognizing the value of making such information publicly available in a uniform way, this reporting is well beyond the current capacity of the BOR and would necessitate additional resources to implement.

I have formed a committee consisting of deans and administrators who oversee non-credit and credit certificate programs at our colleges. Though recognizing our environmental differences and respecting our individual institutional accreditations, we will develop a comprehensive template that lists all CSU non-credit and credit certificate programs, which shows admissions requirements, curricula, costs, outcomes, available licensure and credentialing. We anticipate having this to you by July 2016.

We look forward to working with the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee throughout this process. We welcome your questions and comments.