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**Testimony for the
Higher Education & Workforce Advancement Committee
From
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Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges
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On behalf of the member institutions of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), I am submitting testimony in support of **HB 7007, AAC Implementing the Recommendations of the Planning Commission**. I was a member of the Commission and strongly urge you to adopt statewide goals for higher education and the workforce and to find ways to bring the sectors together to determine best ways to meet those goals.

The data prepared for the Commission by NCHEMS raise key questions for Connecticut:

- Will we be able to maintain our position as a state with a highly educated workforce?
- Will we be able to meet our workforce needs?
- Will institutions be able to support the adult learners and Latino students who make up the likely pool of new students in a state with a shrinking population?
- Will we link our financial aid and institutional support policies to our strategic goals?

NCHEMS work has uncovered some good points about where we are today, but in many ways the data tell a cautionary tale as we move into the next few years with regard to having a qualified workforce. The good news is that the working age population in Connecticut is well-educated compared to most other states. The overall educational attainment level of our working age population has decreased, however, over the past decade and our rural and inner city communities have the lowest attainment levels.

NCHEMS documented that the K-12 achievement gap in Connecticut continues as an attainment gap in college. In fact, the attainment gap between whites and minorities in Connecticut is greater than in all but two (CO, CA) other states and greater than the national average. The gap is larger for younger workers than for the population as a whole.

NCHEMS further documented that we are lucky to have a high proportion of our high school graduates enroll in college (2nd in country) and a comparatively high high-school graduation rate. We are at the bottom of the pack, however, in terms of enrollment of adults who have completed high school but not received a post-secondary credential. This will be a key factor to remember as we look at opportunities to meet state goals in the future.

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

Our significant challenge is that by 2020, 70% of all jobs in CT will require some education beyond high school. Our current rate is 56%...we have far to go in a brief time period. Employers are already indicating that they expect to have to increase their importation of workers.

Upon review of all of the data, NCHEMS is recommending that we maintain the goal of having 70% of our workforce educated at some level beyond high school but thinks it will take until at least 2025 rather than 2020. If we do nothing different, by 2025 we will be short by more than 300,000 degrees and a year over year increase of 3350 degrees and certificates would be needed to get to the goal.

The true challenge for Connecticut is whether we can hear the alarm bells ringing and take thoughtful, strategic and collaborative actions that are different than what has always been done. All states have set goals for degree attainment. It is time for Connecticut to do the same and then to bring all sectors to the table to figure out ways to meet these goals.