



**Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
RB 1084: An Act Concerning Certificate Programs
at the Regional Community-Technical Colleges
Submitted by Dr. Alice Pritchard, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund
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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. For decades, CWEALF has advocated for strategies to increase access for girls and women to post-secondary education opportunities that pay a living wage, most recently through our efforts in leading the Campaign for a Working Connecticut.

The Campaign is a unique and diverse state-wide coalition whose mission is to promote the state's economic competitiveness through the development of sustainable, effective workforce solutions to increase workers' skills and advance families to self-sufficiency. Its membership consists of education and training providers, workforce investment boards, advocates, unions and chambers of commerce.

The Campaign for a Working Connecticut urges your support for *RB 1084: An Act Concerning Certificate Programs at the Regional Community-Technical Colleges*.

In today's workforce, vocational training and post-secondary education are increasingly important for securing employment that provides sufficient wages. Across Connecticut, additional training or certification is required by a growing number of professions and approximately 66% of jobs created by 2018 will require at least some post-secondary education.

RB 1084 calls for establishing much needed consistency and reporting on certificate programs offered by institutions of higher education and private occupational skills. Currently, individuals seeking non-degree technical training are bombarded by information about available programs but with no real way to determine the best course of action for the best price. This bill will help to standardize certificate program information and create regular reporting on the results of that training.

However, I would suggest that data related to cost should be included in the annual reporting as well. For instance, it would be important to know the cost of the certificate program, any additional costs related to certification testing, and whether the program is eligible for federal financial aid. With this data, individuals can make more informed choices about their career opportunities and the state can determine whether programs are consistent both in terms of content and price.

In addition, this would allow the state to determine which programs are not eligible for federal financial aid and might be suitable for state financial aid provided to the public colleges and universities. Raised Bill 634, which was not drafted this year, would have allowed colleges to extend state financial aid to eligible individuals toward non-degree courses and/or certificate programs at community-technical colleges that lead to an industry recognized credential and accessibility to current job openings.

Currently, individuals seeking non-degree technical training cannot receive financial aid even if they would otherwise qualify. While the cost of receiving a certificate or taking non-degree courses is often cheaper than enrolling in degree coursework, it is still a significant investment and presents a barrier to workers with limited financial means.

Therefore, I urge your support of RB 1084 with additional information on cost and financial aid availability.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.