



Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
H.B. 5072: An Act Concerning Higher Education Certificate Programs
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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) 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 been vocal in advocating for strategies to increase access for women and girls to post-secondary education and training opportunities that pay a living wage, most recently through our leading the Campaign for a Working Connecticut (CWCT).

The CWCT is a state-wide coalition of education and training providers, workforce investment boards and advocates whose mission is to promote the state's economic competitiveness through the development of sustainable, effective workplace solutions to increase workers' skills and advance families to self-sufficiency.

The CWCT urges your support for *H.B. 5072: An Act Concerning Higher Education Certificate Programs*.

Vocational training and post-secondary education are increasingly important for securing employment that provides sufficient wages in today's workforce. Across the state, additional training is required by an increasing number of professions: by 2018, approximately 66% of new jobs will require at least some post-secondary education.

H.B. 5072 will establish much needed consistency and reporting on sub-baccalaureate certificate programs offered by institutions of higher education and private occupational schools. Students currently seeking non-degree technical training are too often overwhelmed with information about available programs with no real way to determine which option or training program would be best. H.B. 5072 will help standardize certificate program information and create regular reporting on the results of that training, which will in turn assist students in making more informed choices about their career opportunities.

H.B. 5072 expands on last year's similarly proposed bill by including schools and training programs report data related to cost, including tuition and fees, as well as median loan debt incurred by students who complete such a program; however, it does not include reporting on the cost of the actual program or additional costs related to certification testing. With this data, the state would be better able to determine whether training programs are consistent in terms of both price and content.

The CWCT also suggests that language include reporting on which programs are eligible for federal financial aid, which would allow the state to assess which programs are not eligible and might be suitable for state financial aid provided to public colleges and universities. Currently, individuals seeking non-degree technical training cannot receive financial aid even if they would otherwise qualify. Though the cost of non-degree courses or certificate training is often less expensive than enrolling in degree coursework, it is still a significant investment that presents a barrier to workers and students who are limited financially.

We urge your support for H.B. 5072 with additional information on costs and financial aid.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.