

Testimony of David Welsh on Raised Bill 5332
“An Act Concerning the Governor’s Scholarship Program”

Thursday, February 25, 2016

As the Director of Student Financial Assistance at Tunxis Community College in Farmington, I support Raised Bill 5332, which would make significant improvements to the Governor’s Scholarship.

The proposal to make pro-rated awards to part-time students is particularly welcome. Pro-rating awards for part-time students is logical and consistent with the intent of this program to help students meet their direct costs. If the Governor’s Scholarship determines that a given award amount is appropriate for full-time enrollment, it’s reasonable – and more comprehensible to students – that half that amount be awarded for half-time enrollment. It will also eliminate one unintended consequence of the current award structure, which is that some students actually receive a larger Governor’s Scholarship for part-time study than they would for full-time study.

The current award structure has another unfortunate consequence. Since community college students often have to juggle the demands of family, employment, and college, they tend to change enrollment status after their initial registration for a term, and from one term to the next within the academic year. The Governor’s Scholarship’s current rules make it impossible for the required award changes to be automated; therefore college staff spend a considerable amount of time manually adjusting awards – time which could certainly be better spent.

To avoid ambiguity I would suggest that the Bill be amended to specify the following pro-ration. For 9 to 11 credit hours a student will receive 75% of the full-time grant; for 6 to 8 credit hours, 50%, and for 3 to 5, 25%.

I also support the proposed changes to the institutional allocation formula. Using full-time equivalent enrollment will put all colleges on an equal footing, since the current formula drastically undervalues students who attend part-time. This has resulted in insufficient appropriations to the community colleges, where we serve a greater share of disadvantaged students than do other sectors. In addition, using enrollment data from two years prior will enable allocations to be made in a more timely manner than is now possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these thoughts. I believe that RB 5332 will further the goals of persistence and completion while helping our community colleges maintain the commitment of access to opportunity for the non-traditional students we were created to serve.

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