State of Connecticut

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Testimony in favor of HB 5362 AAC Transparency Regarding Tuition Costs

By Senator Toni Boucher

March 1, 2016

Chairperson Bartolomeo, Chairperson Willis, Ranking Member Witkos, Ranking Member Betts and other distinguished members of the Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of HB 5362, AAC Transparency Regarding Tuition Costs.

One of the most important challenges facing higher education in our country is it's ever rising expense. According to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, average college tuition and fees have increased by 440 per cent over the last twenty five years. The cost of college continues its upward course, even as median household income has declined.

Squeezed on all sides by expanding costs and reduced income, some students despair of being able to afford a college education at all. Those who do obtain a degree find themselves saddled with an average debt of $29,000 and many have begun to wonder whether the rewards of higher education are worth the expense. It is no wonder that across the nation, enrollment in our colleges and universities has declined as students grow skeptical that their tuition dollars will redound to their benefit.

HB 5362 is a small step toward bolstering our students' faith in higher education institutions, by allowing them and their families to see what portion of the college's anticipated revenue will be set aside for various purposes. These purposes include "tuition waivers, tuition remissions, [and] grants for educational expenses" as well as other monies which may be set aside to provide assistance for students who demonstrate financial need, but who do not fall under the normal criteria for receiving financial assistance.

If Connecticut is to maintain the skilled and education workforce that has been the bedrock of its success, it must ensure that our students continue to view higher education a waypoint on the path to greater opportunity and success. Encouraging greater transparency with regard to tuition costs is an effective way of increasing student confidence and of encouraging our schools dedicate funds wisely.