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**Testimony for the
Higher Education and Workforce Advancement Committee of
Jennifer Widness, President
Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges
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On behalf of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), I am submitting testimony on **H.B. 5376, AN ACT CONCERNING AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT**, which seeks to require the inclusion of affirmative consent as a standard in every institution of higher education's policy regarding sexual assault, stalking and intimate partner violence.

Sexual violence on campus is a critically important issue that all of our member institutions take seriously and are working hard to prevent. As a recent report produced by the Office of Legislative Research (OLR) found, nearly every public and independent institution of higher education in Connecticut has adopted an affirmative consent standard.* Our member institutions recognize that an affirmative consent standard is important to ensure that communication regarding sexual activity be active and ongoing between both partners.

As the OLR report noted, the affirmative consent standards adopted by higher education institutions in this state vary. Some institutions have deliberately incorporated the term “unambiguous”, as was used in the 2015 legislation on this topic, into their affirmative consent definition instead of “clear”, as is used in this bill. “Unambiguous” is now well understood in practice among campuses, and it reflects the findings from research that ambiguous communications are treated by most people as a signal to stop and resolve the ambiguity. We would ask the committee to consider incorporating this word into the bill’s definition so those institutions that have implemented the concept of unambiguous consent would not be required to change their definition or policies that are working well.

CCIC member institutions are supportive of the goals of this bill and we applaud the leaders of this Committee for their commitment to this issue.

* The OLR Reports notes that not all independent colleges had submitted the annual report required by Public Act 14-11. The three institutions cited have since submitted their reports and are posted [online](#).