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Testimony for the  
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc.  
February 18, 2016

As a member of the Connecticut business community, I want to register my support for SB 24, AN ACT CONCERNING PROGRAM APPROVAL FOR INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, which seeks to exempt independent institutions of higher education in Connecticut that meet specific standards from the academic program approval process administered by the Office of Higher Education.

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc., headquartered in Stamford, CT, is one of the leading hotel and leisure companies in the world with more than 1,270 properties in some 100 countries and over 180,000 employees at its owned and managed properties. Starwood is a fully integrated owner, operator and franchisor of hotels, resorts and residences under the renowned brands: St. Regis®, The Luxury Collection®, W®, Westin®, Le Méridien®, Sheraton®, Tribute Portfolio™, Four Points® by Sheraton, Aloft®, Element®, along with an expanded partnership with Design Hotels™.

Starwood (and other CT businesses) is consistently seeking to hire qualified individuals for our corporate office, especially in the information technology and digital marketing disciplines. However, due to a lack of available talent in the state, Starwood has been forced to both import workers from overseas and to move resources to out-of-state locations that offer an ample pool of employees in these sought-after disciplines.

The work being done by the colleges and universities here in Connecticut to prepare students for employment is extremely important to the business community. Even more critical is the work that these institutions do to develop and implement programs that will prepare students for the jobs that businesses have to offer today and in the future. We count on these institutions to seek our input and respond rapidly to the changing needs of the business world. One of the challenges in Connecticut has long been the ability of our independent institutions of higher education to respond quickly and effectively to the needs of the business industry in this state. If we need a program created to meet a growing need for talent in a certain field, the regulatory requirements for program review by the State stifle the independent colleges' capacity to be nimble, flexible and responsive. This requirement means that it can take months—if not years—for that new program to be offered.



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With 43 states that have approval processes that are less burdensome than Connecticut's, we are at a distinct disadvantage. We need the independent institutions of higher education in this state, and particularly in Fairfield County, to assist us in developing post-secondary programs that will lead to new jobs to help grow Connecticut's economy. Removing this regulatory barrier will help in that effort.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth S. Siegel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "K".

Kenneth S. Siegel