



Statement on SB 24 - An Act Concerning Program Approval for Independent Institutions of Higher Education

Connecticut General Assembly Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee February 18, 2016

The MetroHartford Alliance serves as the region's economic development leader and the City of Hartford's Chamber of Commerce. Our investors include businesses of all sizes, health care providers, arts and higher education institutions as well as the municipalities of North Central Connecticut. Our mission is to ensure that the region competes aggressively and successfully for jobs, capital, and talent so that it thrives as one of the country's premier places for all people to live, play, work, and raise a family. Connecticut's need for a highly educated workforce is at the root of our support for SB 24, An Act Concerning Program Approval For Independent Institutions of Higher Education.

Connecticut's ability to retain jobs, create new employment opportunities and strengthen our economy is inextricably linked to a skilled, educated workforce. By exempting Connecticut independent institutions of higher education from meeting specific standards of academic program approval by the Office of Higher Education, SB 24 will allow independent colleges to be more responsive to the business community's workforce needs. Eliminating these burdensome regulatory requirements will not only allow independent colleges and universities to be more flexible in designing and deploying in-demand programs, they will also be able to do so more quickly.

SB 24 seeks to exempt from the approval process only those private, non-profit, institutions of higher education that have been operating in Connecticut for ten years. Further, exempt institutions would need to have regional accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and would need to be eligible to receive federal financial aid.

Nationally, only seven states have a program approval process for non-profit independent colleges and universities that is as burdensome as Connecticut's process. This process presents an un-level playing field that disadvantages the independent schools, their students, and the business community that relies on Connecticut's higher education sector to meet their pressing workforce needs.

Connecticut boasts many leading independent institutions of higher education that are critical to meeting the needs of employers in our state. SB 24 represents an opportunity to support the schools, the students and the employers that will strengthen our economy for years to come.

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