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**Testimony for the
Public Safety and Security Committee from
Jennifer Widness, President
Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges
March 1, 2016**

On behalf of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges, I am submitting testimony to oppose **SB 122, An Act Concerning Security at Institutions of Higher Education**. CCIC's member institutions take the safety and security of our students very seriously but we have concerns about some of the significant challenges this bill will pose to our institutions if adopted.

SB 122 seeks to require all armed personnel at an independent institution to be P.O.S.T. Certified. To maintain P.O.S.T. Certification, an individual must maintain continuous employment as a *sworn police officer*.

Currently, only two of sixteen CCIC member institutions have established a sworn police force (see complete list below). Of the remaining fourteen independent institutions in this state, three have armed public safety officers on staff, one has subcontracted armed private security officers and ten have unarmed campus safety officers.

The three campuses with armed public safety staff -- the University of Hartford, Quinnipiac University and Fairfield University -- will be impacted most significantly by this bill for if it passes as is, unsworn public safety officials could no longer be armed.

These three institutions understand it to be in the best interest of their students for some public safety staff to be armed but have chosen not to establish a sworn force at this time for a variety of reasons. Public safety staff are trained to support students in ways that are different than local law enforcement and they have the capacity to work collaboratively with the local police force, where appropriate. Armed public safety staff are trained to respond immediately to threats of violence on campus and do not have to wait for outside resources who are less familiar with an institution, to respond effectively.

Albertus Magnus College

Connecticut College

Fairfield University

Goodwin College

Mitchell College

Quinnipiac University

Rensselaer at Hartford

Sacred Heart University

St. Vincent's College

Trinity College

University of Bridgeport

University of Hartford

University of New Haven

University of Saint Joseph

Wesleyan University

Yale University

It is our understanding the impetus for this bill is a concern about the hiring and training standards these campuses have in place for their armed public safety staff. As outlined in the written testimony submitted by the University of Hartford, Quinnipiac University and Fairfield University, each institution takes the hiring and training of their staff very seriously.

It is not a simple solution for an independent institution that wants to continue to arm public safety staff to create a sworn force and send staff to P.O.S.T. for six months of training. The costs to implement a sworn force are high and require significant planning by the institutions to adopt. In addition, the institutions must get statutory authority to create the force (like the community colleges are seeking in SB 25) or enter into an agreement with the local police force. Towns may not be willing to take on this added burden without a thorough investigation.

CCIC's member institutions welcome a conversation with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection and Chief Flaherty at P.O.S.T. about developing uniform state standards for armed public safety. We need time, however, to have that conversation and we ask Committee members to consider revising this bill to allow for a study to occur over the next nine months. Some alternatives to P.O.S.T. Certification to be considered include:

- Require that independent institutions that employ armed campus safety personnel submit to DESPP for approval on a biennial basis hiring and training requirements for such personnel;
- Require armed campus safety personnel receive annual firearms training provided by a certified firearms instructor that meets or exceeds the standards of P.O.S.T.;
- Require campus safety personnel have access to register for trainings offered by P.O.S.T.; and
- Amend 10a-156 to provide the *capacity* for independent institutions to establish a sworn special police force subject to the approval of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, similar to what the community colleges are seeking in SB 25.

Student safety is of utmost importance to all of CCIC Member Institutions. We look forward to working with members of the Committee, DESPP and P.O.S.T. to make sure students continue to be protected appropriately.

CCIC Member Institutions: Campus Safety Status

Sworn Police Force:

To be sworn, an independent institution must be a special police force authorized in statute or be authorized by a local police force.

University of New Haven

Yale

Armed, not sworn – Campus Employees

Fairfield University

Quinnipiac University

University of Hartford

Armed, not sworn -- Outsourced

University of Bridgeport

Unarmed, not sworn

Albertus Magnus College

Wesleyan University

Connecticut College

Trinity College

Goodwin College

Rensselaer at Hartford

University of St. Joseph

Mitchell College

St. Vincent's College

Sacred Heart University