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**Testimony for the  
Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee from  
Jennifer Widness, President  
Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges  
February 23, 2017**

On behalf of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges I am submitting testimony on a handful of bills before you today.

**Proposed S.B. No. 570 AN ACT CONCERNING LOAN  
INFORMATION PROVIDED TO STUDENTS BY INSTITUTIONS OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION**

CCIC opposes this bill. Students attending our member institutions receive a very small amount of state financial aid. Implementing this at those schools would be incredibly burdensome. Students have access to this information already through the National Student Loan Data System, which also provides information on financial literacy, level of debt, repayment options, etc. Institutions also give an entrance interview and an exit interview to all students. There is federal guidance on this issue that should be examined if this bill were to move forward.

In addition, many times our member institutions do not know who will be awarded state financial aid until long after the loans are taken out. We do not receive rosters for the need-merit allocations until mid-fall and our need-based allocations have been cut every year over the summer for the last five years.

**Proposed S.B. No. 571 AN ACT CONCERNING THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEARN HERE, LIVE HERE  
PROGRAM**

CCIC supports this bill. Connecticut has a net loss of 5,000 college-going students annually while every other state around it has a net gain of over 5,000 students. Of the 10,000 students that come to Connecticut each year to enroll in college from out-of-state, over 7,000 of those students are enrolling

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Albertus Magnus College  
Connecticut College  
Fairfield University  
Goodwin College  
Mitchell College  
Quinnipiac University  
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

in our member institutions. We would welcome incentives that keep more of our alumni in state upon graduation. Our economy is in need of more young talent to ensure we have the highly educated workforce our economy requires to grow. In addition, our institutions benefit from having a strong local alumni base.

**Proposed H.B. No. 5116 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM TO COLLECT DATA REGARDING IN-STATE STUDENTS THAT WILL ENABLE PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS REGARDING THEIR INTENDED CAREER PATHS**

**Proposed H.B. No. 5266 AN ACT REQUIRING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TRACKING SYSTEM TO HELP STUDENTS OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR CAREER PATHS**

CCIC supports the intent of both Proposed Bill 5116 and 5266. Much of this data is already collected and available in large part due to the work of P20 WIN, the Preschool through 20 and Workforce Information Network, the state's longitudinal data-sharing system. P20 WIN is not a data warehouse but a series of legal agreements between participating agencies that provide a vehicle to share and match unit-record data to answer specific policy questions regarding the effectiveness of certain state and federally funded educational programs. Participating agencies in P20 WIN currently include the State Department of Education, the Board of Regents, the University of Connecticut, the Department of Labor and CCIC. The Office of Early Childhood should be joining in the next few weeks.

P20 WIN has the capacity to produce reports on the percentage of students enrolled in remedial education at various public institutions of higher education as well as wage and employment-outcomes for graduates of Connecticut institutions of higher education that remain in state to work upon graduation.

P20 WIN is an incredible asset to the state that is currently being underutilized because of a lack of resources. There is no staff exclusively serving this project and no resources for marketing or a website for sharing data.

Given all the challenges facing Connecticut, including the need to retain more of our graduates and produce more degrees in key industries of growth, P20 WIN should be supported and utilized to a greater extent to help inform policy decisions.

**Proposed H.B. No. 6162 AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A DEBT-FREE PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS ATTENDING PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

CCIC applauds the proponents of this bill for making debt-free higher education a priority. Providing access to quality higher education is critical to a healthy state economy that requires a highly educated workforce. Affordability is an issue facing our member institutions as well and something we focus on every day.

Connecticut's independent colleges play a significant role in educating people in Connecticut – we enroll nearly 50,000 undergraduate students, just shy of 30% of the total, and award nearly 45% of the bachelor's degrees earned.

Because we play such a critical role in educating our states' citizens, it is important for legislators to continue to support providing access and choice to all of our higher education institutions through support of the state's long-standing need-based financial aid program, now the Roberta Willis Scholarship Program. Resources for

that grant program have been reduced dramatically over the last few years and it is likely further reductions will be made in the next biennium budget. We would be concerned if those already limited resources were then utilized to support debt-free higher education in this state and thus reducing student choice even further for needy Connecticut students.

In addition, CCIC's member institutions are diverse as the students they serve:

- Two-thirds of our institutions have endowments smaller than the University of Connecticut and half have endowments smaller than CCSU;
- Over half enroll more than 40% Connecticut students at the undergraduate level; and
- One-half of our member institutions have an undergraduate student body of less than 3,000.

This proposal, if adopted, will impact each school quite differently. We caution legislators about the unintended consequences that a debt-free college program may have for some of the smaller private colleges in your communities that may be devastated by this proposal.

We await further details on how this program would work, who might be eligible and how it might be funded and look forward to working with Committee members on this issue.