

Good afternoon Higher Education Committee, concerned staff, students and community members. My name is Rose Pierre. Four years ago, I was a student at Norwalk Community College; I can say that I am a proud recipient of the NCC Foundation Path Transfer Scholarship. Without this, attaining a four-year degree would have been improbable. During my two years at NCC, I was groomed, mentored and most importantly, prepared to move into the next phase in my educational journey. As a result of my NCC experience, I went on to attain a master's in Higher Education at NYU and now work as the Scholarship Manager at the NCC Foundation. Today, I seat before you, in hopes that I can shed light on the importance of maintaining the identity of each community college and what it means to put "Students First".

I want to remind the committee that this is about real people, with real lives. Let us not forget the real impact of this Consolidation. It is about a single mother who may not have the time to travel the extra 10 miles for a course, it is about a student with anxiety having to navigate multiple campus cultures. This consolidation is about hijacking a student's chance of becoming #NCCProud.

As the committee moves forward with this consolidation, please remember the importance of each student's pride as they identify with Norwalk Community College, Naugatuck Valley Community College, not Nutmeg Community College or Connecticut Community College.

As administrators of this consolidation, I hope that politics, money, personal agendas do not hinder the true meaning of "students first". Students first is providing access and equal opportunities to all students while fostering a sense of community. Will this consolidation do that? Our students, alumni, community and donors identify with Norwalk Community College, which is the reason they invest in its growth and development.

As Michelle Obama once said, "Public education is our greatest pathway to opportunity in America. So we need to invest in and strengthen our public colleges and universities today, and for generations to come". Higher Education Committee you have the chance to do just that, will you?

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