March 7, 2019

Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 2700  
300 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Chairwomen Osten and Walker and members of the committee,

My name is Bobby Berriault and I am currently at a student at the University of Connecticut School of Law. I am writing in support of allocating more funding to our states publicly higher educational institutions especially to our community colleges and the four state universities within the CSCU system, and I want to encourage everyone on the committee as well as in the House and in the Senate to support this as well.

I had a really difficult life growing up. As someone who grew up in five foster homes and two group homes, who grew up in poverty and without a family, and who has Asperger’s; I was told time and time again – by my teachers and by my guidance counselors at school and other adults that I shouldn’t bother having dreams of going to college or becoming a lawyer. The reasoned that my dreams weren’t realistic for me. They reasoned that people who don’t have a family or don’t have money can’t succeed in college or become an attorney. They said that my future was in fast food or retail. That was what I was told. Ever since I was in middle school, I knew I wanted to go into politics and law because no person should ever have to suffer the way that I had growing up, and no child should ever be left behind. I followed my dreams, and I still continue to follow my dreams today. I’m incredibly lucky I am to even make it this far, as only 10% of people who grow up in poverty get to go to college and successfully graduate, only 6% of people who grow up in foster homes get to college and successfully graduate, and only 1% of people who are on the autism spectrum get to go to college and successfully graduate.

The reason why I am as far as I am in life is because of all the help and support I’ve received from Asnuntuck Community College and Central Connecticut State University. Community college was the only avenue for success for me, especially coming from a background without a family and with no money. I did well academically in both my studies in community colleges and state universities and that is why I am able to be enrolled in law school today. The colleges and universities provide a high quality education at a affordable cost for our state residents, and I am so incredibly lucky and thankful to have the opportunity to successfully complete my education at Asnuntuck and CCSU, and my only hope is that other people who are in a similar position in life like I am can also go to school and become successful as well.

Investing more money into our community colleges and state universities will help our state’s economy. According to a recent economic analysis by CSCU, the CSCU system which encompasses the 12 community colleges, four state universities, and the charter oak college contributes $11 billion annually to the state of Connecticut, with alumni contributing $9.9 billion
in annual income through their earnings. 1 out of 19 jobs in Connecticut is supported by CSCU activities and their students, and for every $1 spent, students gain $6.60 in lifetime earnings, taxpayers gain $3.80 in added tax revenue and savings, and Connecticut gains $11.70 in added state revenue and savings. That’s for every $1 spent. To every single elected official in the general assembly who campaigned on improving the state’s economy, I say this: there is no better way to involve our state’s economy, add more revenue into our state budget, lower the unemployment rate, and convince more employers to move to Connecticut and do business here then to invest in our public schools – whether at the primary, secondary, collegial, or graduate levels. And there is no better way to more effectively jump start the state’s economy then to put more money and resources than to invest in CSCU and our state’s community colleges.

In summary, every child deserves to have the same opportunities as everyone else regardless of what family they were born into, or what zip code they live in, and no person should ever be left behind. That is why it is so critical that we invest more funds into our state’s community colleges and state universities.

Thank you,

Bobby Berriault