On behalf of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges I am submitting testimony on H.B.7148: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREOF, the Governor’s budget recommendations, pertaining to the Roberta Willis Scholarship Program. Governor Lamont has proposed to flat fund this program over the biennium at $33.3 million.

CCIC and its member institutions appreciate the legislative support that the Scholarship Program has received over the last few years and we recognize that the state continues to face significant fiscal challenges.

One of Connecticut’s greatest assets has and always will be, its highly educated workforce, with nearly 50% of our residents holding an associate’s degree or higher. However, the state and national economy is evolving rapidly, and our workforce is not presently educated enough to meet employer demands, as evidenced by the daily news stories about jobs going unfilled in many different sectors.

Connecticut’s Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education, adopted in 2015, notes that by 2025 Connecticut’s economy will require a workforce in which 70% of citizens have some education beyond high school. This means a production of 300,000 more graduates than the current rates of production will yield.

Connecticut must increase attainment levels, retain more talent and harness all sectors of higher education – public and private -- if we are to meet these lofty goals. Prioritizing funding for the Roberta Willis Scholarship Program is the most efficient way to accomplish this. A robust student aid program targets funding to our neediest residents, incentivizes Connecticut students to stay in-state for college and allows them access to the institution that fits them best.

The Roberta Willis Scholarship Program has faced significant reductions the last 8 years. Funding has been reduced from over $60 million to $33 million during this time (see Figure 1-2). Connecticut lags the nation in our investment per student and the percent of higher ed funding allocated towards need-based aid (see Figure 3-5). The program has also faced one of the most drastic reductions in the nation (see Figure 6). A recent analysis by the Hechinger Report found that 80% of CT students that are eligible to receive the state grant are unfunded (see figure 7). This is the 4th highest unmet need in the country.
Connecticut also ranks towards the bottom in the nation for the percent of its high-school graduates who stay in state for college (see Figure 8). Contrary to popular belief, it is not whether an institution is public or private which determines what percent of graduates stay in-state, but what percentage of Connecticut students are enrolled at that institution (see figure 9). In fact, Albertus Magnus College, the University of Saint Joseph and Goodwin College – have higher employment rates of their grads in-state than the public colleges (90%+). Additionally, recent data from P20 WIN found 84% of Roberta Willis Scholarship grant recipients at independent colleges were found working in state after graduation (see figure 10). Many independent colleges enroll a large percentage of needy students and have strong completion rates for these students as well (see Figure 11).

We understand that significant fiscal challenges remain. However, given those very challenges, funding for need-based financial aid to provide access and opportunity to higher education for low-income residents of this state is critically important to grow our workforce. I hope that the legislature’s commitment to maintain funding for this program will continue.
Trends in Funding for State Financial Aid: FY 09 - FY 19

State Funding for Need-based Aid
State Funding for Need-Merit Aid
TOTAL State Funding for Student Financial Aid

Figure 1
Funding for State Financial Aid Programs: FY 10 - FY 19
Source: OFA Budget Books & OHE

Figure 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>FY 10</th>
<th>FY 11</th>
<th>FY 12</th>
<th>FY 13</th>
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<tr>
<td>CT Independent College Student Grant</td>
<td>$23.4</td>
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<td>$16.0</td>
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<td>Capitol Scholarship Program (merit)</td>
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40 other states spend a greater percentage of state funding for higher education on student aid.
CT's investment in student aid per enrolled undergraduate student lags the national average.
Estimated Total Number of Awards per FTE Enrollment, by State: 2016-17

Source: National Association State Student Grant Aid Program (NASSGAP)

CT ranks towards the bottom in the number of awards granted, per FTE student enrolled.
CT’s total investment in need-based aid ranks 27th in the country but this investment was reduced 44% between 2011 and 2017, the 5th highest reduction in the country during this time.
A recent analysis by the Hechinger Report found that 80% of CT students that are eligible to receive the state grant are unfunded. This is the 4th highest unmet need in the country.

Source: [Hechinger Report](#)
Percent of all first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates that enrolled at in-state institutions: Fall 2016

Source: NCES

Only 57% of recent high school graduates enroll in college in-state; this is the 4th lowest percent in the country, after only DC, VT & NH.
Percent of CT Residents Enrolled as Freshman as Compared to Percent of ‘13-’14 Graduates found Employed in CT 8 Quarters after Graduation

Source: P20 WIN

Public and private institutions that enroll a greater percentage of CT students retain more graduates in state upon completion
Percent of 13-14 Graduates from CCIC Institutions* found Employed in CT 8 Quarters after Graduation

Source: P20 WIN

- Percent of Total Grads Working in State Post Q8: 38%
- Percent of Grads that are CT Residents and Working in State in 2016: 75%
- Percent of Grads Receiving Governor's Scholarship & Working in State in 2016: 84%

* Data set limited to: Albertus Magnus College, Goodwin College, Sacred Heart University, University of Hartford, University of New Haven, University of Saint Joseph, Yale and Wesleyan.
Pell Percentages and Graduation Rates of Pell Recipients at Connecticut Public and Private 4-year Institutions of Higher Education, 2017

- Overall graduation rate within 150 percent of normal time for Pell Grant recipients
- Percent of full-time first-time undergraduates awarded Pell grants

Figure 11

Institutions included in the figure are:
- Yale University
- Trinity College
- Wesleyan University
- Connecticut College
- Fairfield University
- Quinnipiac University
- Sacred Heart University
- Albertus Magnus College
- University of Saint Joseph
- University of Hartford
- University of New Haven
- Eastern Connecticut State University
- Central Connecticut State University
- Western Connecticut State University
- Mitchell College
- University of Bridgeport
- Southern Connecticut State University