



# ALBERTUS MAGNUS COLLEGE

VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS



Testimony for the Higher Education & Workforce Advancement Committee  
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Albertus Magnus College  
February 14, 2019

On behalf of Albertus Magnus College, I am submitting testimony in strong support of SB 26 (An Act Making Permanent the Moratorium on Approval of a Certain Number of Programs at Independent Institutions of Higher Education) and SB 131 (An Act Making Permanent the Moratorium on the Approval of the Office of Higher Education for a Certain Number of Programs at Independent Institutions of Higher Education). These acts will make the existing exemption from academic program approval by the Office of Higher Education for private, non-profit colleges that meet certain standards permanent, by deleting the current sunset date of July 1, 2020. Under the review process that had been in place prior to the moratorium, all proposed programs Albertus submitted were approved without substantive changes. At the same time, the process was time consuming and required the use of resources that could have been better directed. The moratorium, which has been in place for three years, has enabled the College to respond more effectively and in a timely manner to the needs of the community.

I also write to express strong opposition to HB 7088 (An Act Concerning Program Approval at Independent Institutions of Higher Education). HB 7088 seeks to require the Office of Higher Education to promulgate regulations to govern which institutions are exempt from program approval. In addition to the current requirements already outlined in state statute, which govern which institutions are exempt from program approval and which are not, HB 7088 requires the Office of Higher Education to adopt thresholds for eligibility for program approval around graduation rates, employment outcomes, and student loan default rates. There is, however, no correlation between these outcomes and the program approval process. An institution's graduation and default rates do not rely on whether or not its programs are reviewed by the Office of Higher Education.

Albertus Magnus College has in place a strong, well-conceived internal review process for vetting proposed new academic programs. New programs are submitted for review by an Academic Policy Committee composed of faculty and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Committee makes recommendations for program adoption to the Faculty Assembly, a body of the faculty as a whole, which in turn makes recommendations to the administration and the Board of Trustees. Program proposals must include a market analysis, a financial analysis that

includes resource and revenue projections, the curriculum, student learning outcomes, and an assessment plan. The College has engaged the services of EAB, a higher education research firm, to assist in market analysis.

To be exempt from the Office of Higher Education's review process, higher education institutions must be regionally accredited for ten years or more. Accredited colleges and universities undergo regular review as part of the New England Commission on Higher Education's (NECHE) rigorous accreditation process. Assessment plans must be in place for individual programs, and institutions must show that they are engaged in processes of continuous improvement, have the appropriate financial resources in place to support their programs, and are meeting reasonable benchmarks for student retention and success. Lifting the moratorium on the program approval process and instituting HU 7088 would add an unnecessary bureaucratic layer that would not contribute to the quality of colleges' and universities' academic programs but would incur unnecessary costs and slow the process of program development and implementation.

During the three years in which the moratorium has been in place, Albertus has worked closely with state agencies such as the Connecticut Department of Social Services and industry associations such as the Connecticut Business and Industry Association to develop programs that contribute to the community, including a Masters in Public Administration and a Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counselling, both of which have exceeded enrollment projections. These programs would have taken approximately twelve months longer to bring on line had the College been required to go through the program approval process. Instead, the College has improved its ability to meet societal needs, and capacity to invest in the development of additional programs in high-demand fields, such as cyber security. The College recently completed the design of an innovative interdisciplinary undergraduate program in cyber security that builds and expands upon offerings in Criminal Justice and Computer Information Systems. The College anticipates offering this program in fall 2019. Taking it through the approval process would have meant launching it in 2020, resulting in delays in filling positions in this demanding field, making Connecticut less attractive as a site for cyber security firms, and limiting Albertus' potential for offering a distinctive, recognized program.

It is important that higher education institutions are able to efficiently and effectively develop and implement innovative programming in a timely manner given the swiftly changing government and industry landscape that has resulted most notably from technological innovation. In so doing, our institutions play a vital role in securing the future of Connecticut. Albertus Magnus College prides itself for offering a liberal arts-based education that serves as a strong foundation for life-long learning while at the same time preparing students to meet the current needs of society through majors designed in collaboration with community stakeholders. We believe that this can best be accomplished through the passage of SB 26 and SB 131 given the requirements for exemption from program review that are in place. Adding an unnecessary review process will compromise the ability of higher education institutions to respond appropriately to today's world.