



General Assembly

**Amendment**

January Session, 2023

LCO No. 8705



Offered by:

SEN. SLAP, 5<sup>th</sup> Dist.

REP. HADDAD, 54<sup>th</sup> Dist.

To: Subst. Senate Bill No. 8

File No. 139

Cal. No. 104

**"AN ACT CONCERNING HIGHER EDUCATION AFFORDABILITY  
AND GRADUATE RETENTION."**

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and substitute the  
2 following in lieu thereof:

3 "Section 1. Section 10a-174 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
4 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

5 (a) As used in this section:

6 (1) "Award" means the greater of: (A) The unpaid portion, if any, of a  
7 qualifying student's eligible institutional costs after subtracting his or  
8 her financial aid, or (B) a minimum award of [two hundred fifty] five  
9 hundred dollars for a full-time student or [one hundred fifty] two  
10 hundred fifty dollars for a part-time student;

11 (2) "Eligible institutional costs" means the tuition and required fees  
12 incurred each semester by an individual student that are established by  
13 the Board of Regents for Higher Education for the regional community-

14 technical colleges;

15 (3) "Financial aid" means the sum of all scholarships, grants and  
16 federal, state and institutional aid received by a qualifying student.  
17 "Financial aid" does not include any federal, state or private student  
18 loans received by a qualifying student;

19 (4) "Qualifying student" means any person who (A) [graduated from  
20 a public or nonpublic high school in the state, (B)] enrolls as a full-time  
21 or part-time student for the fall semester of 2020, or any semester  
22 thereafter, [for the first time] at a regional community-technical college  
23 in a program leading to a degree or certificate, [and continues to be  
24 enrolled as a full-time or part-time student at a regional community-  
25 technical college, (C)] (B) is classified as an in-state student pursuant to  
26 section 10a-29, [(D)] (C) is making satisfactory academic progress while  
27 enrolled at a regional community-technical college, [(E)] (D) has  
28 completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, and [(F)] (E)  
29 has accepted all available financial aid;

30 (5) "Full-time student" means a student who is enrolled at a regional  
31 community-technical college and (A) is carrying twelve or more credit  
32 hours in a semester, or (B) has a learning disability documented with  
33 the regional community-technical college in which he or she is enrolled  
34 and is enrolled in the maximum number of credit hours that is feasible  
35 for such student to attempt in a semester, as determined by such  
36 student's academic advisor;

37 (6) "Semester" means the fall or spring semester of an academic year.  
38 "Semester" does not include a summer semester or session; and

39 (7) "Part-time student" means a student who is enrolled at a regional  
40 community-technical college and is carrying not less than six but fewer  
41 than twelve credit hours in a semester.

42 (b) [Not later than January 1, 2020, the] The Board of Regents for  
43 Higher Education shall (1) establish a debt-free community college  
44 program to make awards to qualifying students each semester, (2) adopt

45 rules, procedures and forms necessary to implement the debt-free  
46 community college program, and (3) submit a report outlining such  
47 rules, procedures and forms, in accordance with the provisions of  
48 section 11-4a, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly  
49 having cognizance of matters relating to higher education.

50 (c) For the fall semester of 2020, and each semester thereafter, the  
51 Board of Regents for Higher Education shall make awards to qualifying  
52 students within available appropriations. An award shall be available  
53 to a qualifying student for the first seventy-two credit hours earned by  
54 the qualifying student [during the first forty-eight months that such  
55 student is enrolled] at a regional community-technical college, provided  
56 the qualifying student meets and continues to meet the requirements of  
57 this section. The board shall not use an award to supplant any financial  
58 aid, including, but not limited to, state or institutional aid, otherwise  
59 available to a qualifying student.

60 [(d) (1) Any qualifying student who takes an administratively  
61 approved medical or personal leave of absence from a regional  
62 community-technical college may continue to qualify for the debt-free  
63 community college program upon resuming his or her enrollment as a  
64 student at a regional community-technical college, provided such  
65 student (A) continues to meet the requirements of this section upon  
66 reenrollment, and (B) the total amount of time of all approved leaves of  
67 absence does not exceed six months.

68 (2) Any qualifying student who is a member of the armed forces  
69 called to active duty during any semester may continue to qualify for  
70 the debt-free community college program upon resuming his or her  
71 enrollment as a student at a regional community-technical college,  
72 provided such student (A) continues to meet the requirements of this  
73 section upon reenrollment, and (B) reenrolls not later than four years  
74 after the date on which such student is released from active duty.]

75 [(e)] (d) Not later than March 1, 2021, and October 1, 2021, and each  
76 semester thereafter, the Board of Regents for Higher Education shall

77 report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint  
78 standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of  
79 matters relating to higher education and employment advancement and  
80 appropriations and the budgets of the state agencies regarding the debt-  
81 free community college program, including, but not limited to, (1) the  
82 number of qualifying students enrolled at the regional community-  
83 technical colleges during each semester, (2) the number of qualifying  
84 students receiving minimum awards and the number of qualifying  
85 students receiving awards for the unpaid portion of eligible institutional  
86 costs, (3) the average number of credit hours the qualifying students  
87 enrolled in each semester and the average number of credit hours the  
88 qualifying students completed each semester, (4) the average amount of  
89 the award made to qualifying students under this section for the unpaid  
90 portion of eligible institutional costs, and (5) the completion rates of  
91 qualifying students receiving awards under this section by degree or  
92 certificate program.

93 Sec. 2. Section 10a-173 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
94 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

95 (a) For the purposes of this section:

96 (1) "Family contribution" means the expected family contribution for  
97 educational costs as computed from [the] a student's Free Application  
98 for Federal Student Aid;

99 (2) "Student aid index" means the index used to determine eligibility  
100 for financial aid as computed from a student's Free Application for  
101 Federal Student Aid;

102 [(2) "Full-time or part-time undergraduate student"] (3) "Eligible  
103 student" means a student who is (A) a resident of the state, (B) enrolled  
104 at an institution of higher education in a course of study leading to such  
105 student's first associate or bachelor's degree, and [who is] (C) carrying,  
106 for a full-time student, twelve or more semester credit hours, or, for a  
107 part-time student, between six and eleven semester credit hours at such  
108 institution of higher education;

109 [(3)] (4) "Independent institution of higher education" means a  
110 nonprofit institution established in this state (A) that has degree-  
111 granting authority in this state; (B) that has its main campus located in  
112 this state; (C) that is not included in the Connecticut system of public  
113 higher education; and (D) whose primary function is not the preparation  
114 of students for religious vocation;

115 [(4)] (5) "Public institution of higher education" means the constituent  
116 units of the state system of higher education identified in subdivisions  
117 (1) and (2) of section 10a-1, except the regional community-technical  
118 colleges;

119 [(5)] (6) "Eligible educational costs" means the tuition and required  
120 fees for an individual student that are published by each public or  
121 independent institution of higher education participating in the grant  
122 program established under this section, plus a fixed amount for  
123 required books and educational supplies as determined by the Office of  
124 Higher Education.

125 (b) [The state, acting through the] The Office of Higher Education [ ]  
126 shall establish the [Governor's] Roberta B. Willis Scholarship program  
127 to annually make need-based financial aid available for eligible  
128 educational costs [for Connecticut residents] to eligible students  
129 enrolled at Connecticut's public and independent institutions of higher  
130 education, [as full-time or part-time undergraduate students beginning  
131 with new or transfer students in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014. On  
132 and after July 1, 2016, said program shall be known as the "Roberta B.  
133 Willis Scholarship program". Any award made to a student in the fiscal  
134 year ending June 30, 2013, under the capitol scholarship grant program,  
135 established under section 10a-169 of the general statutes, revision of  
136 1958, revised to January 1, 2013, the Connecticut aid to public college  
137 students grant program, established under section 10a-164a of the  
138 general statutes, revision of 1958, revised to January 1, 2013, Connecticut  
139 aid to Charter Oak, established under subsection (c) of section 10a-164a  
140 of the general statutes, revision of 1958, revised to January 1, 2013, or the  
141 Connecticut independent college student grant program, established

142 under section 10a-36 of the general statutes, revision of 1958, revised to  
143 January 1, 2013, shall be offered under the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship  
144 program and be renewable for the life of the original award, provided  
145 such student meets and continues to meet the need and academic  
146 standards established for purposes of the program under which such  
147 student received the original award.]

148 [(c)] Within available [appropriations] funds, the Roberta B. Willis  
149 Scholarship program shall include a need and merit-based grant, a  
150 need-based grant and a Charter Oak grant. The need and merit-based  
151 grant shall be funded at not less than twenty per cent but not more than  
152 thirty per cent of available [appropriations] funds or ten million dollars,  
153 whichever is greater. The need-based grant shall be funded at up to  
154 eighty per cent of available [appropriations] funds. The Charter Oak  
155 grant shall be not less than one hundred thousand dollars of available  
156 [appropriations] funds. There shall be an administrative allowance  
157 based on one-quarter of one per cent of the available [appropriations]  
158 funds, but [(1) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, not less than three  
159 hundred fifty thousand dollars, and (2) for the fiscal year ending June  
160 30, 2023, and each fiscal year thereafter,] not less than one hundred  
161 thousand dollars annually. [In addition to the amount of the annual  
162 appropriation allocated to the regional community-technical colleges  
163 under subsection (e) of this section, and to regional community-  
164 technical college students under subsection (d) of this section, not less  
165 than two and one-half per cent of the annual appropriation shall be  
166 allocated to the regional community-technical colleges to be used for  
167 financial aid purposes.] For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, the  
168 Office of Higher Education shall first make awards pursuant to  
169 subsection (c) of this section and allocate funds pursuant to subsections  
170 (d) and (f) of this section from any funds allocated to the office from the  
171 federal funds designated for the state pursuant to the provisions of  
172 Section 602 of Subtitle M of Title IX of the American Rescue Plan Act of  
173 2021, P.L. 117-2, as amended from time to time, until such funds are  
174 exhausted, prior to making any awards or allocating any funds from  
175 appropriations from the General Fund.

176 [(d)] (c) The Roberta B. Willis Scholarship need and merit-based grant  
177 shall be available to any [Connecticut resident who is a full-time or part-  
178 time undergraduate] eligible student at any public or independent  
179 institution of higher education. The Office of Higher Education shall  
180 determine [eligibility by] qualification for financial need based on  
181 family contribution prior to July 1, 2024, and, on and after July 1, 2024,  
182 based on student aid index and [eligibility by] qualification for merit  
183 based on either previous high school academic achievement or  
184 performance on standardized academic aptitude tests. The Office of  
185 Higher Education shall make awards according to a sliding scale,  
186 annually determined by said office, up to a maximum family  
187 contribution or student aid index and based on available  
188 [appropriations and] funds and the number of eligible students who  
189 qualify for an award. The Roberta B. Willis Scholarship need and merit-  
190 based grant shall be awarded in a higher amount than the need-based  
191 grant awarded pursuant to subsection [(e)] (d) of this section. Recipients  
192 of the need and merit-based grant shall not be eligible to receive an  
193 additional need-based award. The order of institutions of higher  
194 education provided by [a] an eligible student on [the] such student's  
195 Free Application for Federal Student Aid shall not affect the student's  
196 [eligibility] qualification for an award under this subsection. The  
197 [accepting] institution of higher education in which an eligible student  
198 enrolls shall disburse sums awarded under the need and merit-based  
199 grant for payment of [the] such student's eligible educational costs.

200 [(e)] (d) The Roberta B. Willis Scholarship need-based grant shall be  
201 available to any [Connecticut resident who is a full-time or part-time  
202 undergraduate] eligible student at any public or independent institution  
203 of higher education. The amount of the annual [appropriation] funds to  
204 be allocated to each institution of higher education shall be determined  
205 by its actual full-time equivalent enrollment of [undergraduate students  
206 who are Connecticut residents] eligible students with a family  
207 contribution or student aid index during the fall semester of the fiscal  
208 year two years prior to the grant year of an amount not greater than two  
209 hundred per cent of the maximum family contribution or student aid

210 index eligible for a federal Pell grant award for the academic year one  
211 year prior to the grant year. Not later than July first, annually, each  
212 institution of higher education shall report such enrollment data to the  
213 Office of Higher Education. Not later than October first, annually, the  
214 Office of Higher Education shall (1) publish such enrollment data on its  
215 Internet web site, [and] (2) notify each institution of higher education of  
216 the proportion of the annual [appropriation] funds that such institution  
217 of higher education will receive the following fiscal year, and (3) publish  
218 the proportions for each institution of higher education on its Internet  
219 web site. Participating institutions of higher education shall make  
220 awards (A) to eligible full-time students in an amount up to four  
221 thousand five hundred dollars, and (B) to eligible part-time students in  
222 an amount that is prorated according to the number of credits each  
223 student will earn for completing the course or courses in which such  
224 student is enrolled, such that a student enrolled in a course or courses  
225 earning (i) at least nine but less than twelve credits is eligible for up to  
226 seventy-five per cent of the maximum award, and (ii) at least six but less  
227 than nine credits is eligible for up to fifty per cent of the maximum  
228 award. Each participating institution of higher education shall expend  
229 all of the moneys received under the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship  
230 program as direct financial assistance only for eligible educational costs.

231 [(f)] (e) Participating institutions of higher education shall annually  
232 provide the Office of Higher Education with data and reports on all  
233 [Connecticut] eligible students who applied for financial aid, including,  
234 but not limited to, students receiving a Roberta B. Willis Scholarship  
235 grant, in a form and at a time determined by said office. If an institution  
236 of higher education fails to submit information to the Office of Higher  
237 Education as directed, such institution shall be prohibited from  
238 participating in the scholarship program in the fiscal year following the  
239 fiscal year in which such institution failed to submit such information.  
240 Each participating institution of higher education shall maintain, for a  
241 period of not less than three years, records substantiating the reported  
242 number of [Connecticut] eligible students and documentation utilized  
243 by the institution of higher education in determining [eligibility]



244 qualification of the student grant recipients. Such records shall be  
245 subject to audit or review. Funds not obligated by an institution of  
246 higher education shall be returned by May first in the fiscal year the  
247 grant was made to the Office of Higher Education for reallocation.  
248 Financial aid provided to [Connecticut residents] eligible students  
249 under this program shall be designated as a grant from the Roberta B.  
250 Willis Scholarship program.

251 [(g)] (f) The Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Charter Oak grant shall be  
252 available to any [full-time or part-time undergraduate] eligible student  
253 enrolled in Charter Oak State College. The Office of Higher Education  
254 shall allocate any [appropriation] funds to Charter Oak State College to  
255 be used to provide grants for eligible educational costs to [residents of  
256 this state] eligible students who demonstrate substantial financial need  
257 and who are matriculated in a degree program at Charter Oak State  
258 College. Individual awards shall not exceed a student's calculated  
259 eligible educational costs. Financial aid provided to [Connecticut  
260 residents] eligible students under this program shall be designated as a  
261 grant from the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship program.

262 [(h)] (g) In administering the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship program,  
263 the Office of Higher Education shall develop and utilize fiscal  
264 procedures designed to ensure accountability of the public funds  
265 expended. Such procedures shall include provisions for compliance  
266 reviews that shall be conducted by the Office of Higher Education on  
267 any institution of higher education that participates in the program.  
268 Commencing with the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015, and biennially  
269 thereafter, each such institution of higher education shall submit the  
270 results of an audit done by an independent certified public accountant  
271 for each year of participation in the program. Any institution of higher  
272 education determined by the Office of Higher Education not to be in  
273 substantial compliance with the provisions of the Roberta B. Willis  
274 Scholarship program shall be ineligible to receive funds under the  
275 program for the fiscal year following the fiscal year in which the  
276 institution of higher education was determined not to be in substantial  
277 compliance. Funding shall be restored when the Office of Higher

278 Education determines that the institution of higher education has  
279 returned to substantial compliance.

280 Sec. 3. Subsection (f) of section 4-89 of the general statutes is repealed  
281 and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2023*):

282 (f) The provisions of this section shall not apply to appropriations to  
283 (1) the Office of Higher Education for (A) student financial assistance  
284 for the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship program established under section  
285 10a-173, as amended by this act, or (B) the minority advancement  
286 program established under subsection (b) of section 10a-11, (2) the  
287 Board of Regents for Higher Education for (A) Connecticut higher  
288 education centers of excellence established under section 10a-25h, or (B)  
289 the debt-free community college program established pursuant to  
290 section 10a-174, as amended by this act, (3) the operating funds of the  
291 constituent units of the state system of higher education established  
292 pursuant to sections 10a-105, 10a-99 and 10a-77, or (4) the Connecticut  
293 Open Educational Resource Coordinating Council established under  
294 section 10a-44d. Such appropriations shall not lapse until the end of the  
295 fiscal year succeeding the fiscal year of the appropriation except that (A)  
296 centers of excellence appropriations deposited by the Board of Regents  
297 for Higher Education in the Endowed Chair Investment Fund,  
298 established under section 10a-20a, shall not lapse but shall be held  
299 permanently in the Endowed Chair Investment Fund, [and] (B) any  
300 moneys remaining in higher education operating funds of the  
301 constituent units of the state system of higher education shall not lapse  
302 but shall be held permanently in such funds, and (C) any appropriations  
303 to the Office of Higher Education for the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship  
304 program shall not lapse but shall be held permanently for such program.  
305 On or before September first, annually, the Office of Higher Education  
306 and Board of Regents for Higher Education shall submit a report to the  
307 joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of  
308 matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies,  
309 through the Office of Fiscal Analysis, concerning the amount of each  
310 such appropriation carried over from the preceding fiscal year.

311 Sec. 4. Subsection (l) of section 10a-34 of the general statutes is  
312 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*  
313 *2023*):

314 (l) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (b) to (j), inclusive,  
315 of this section and subject to the authority of the State Board of  
316 Education to regulate teacher education programs, an independent  
317 institution of higher education, as defined in section 10a-173, as  
318 amended by this act, shall not require approval by the Office of Higher  
319 Education for any new programs of higher learning or any program  
320 modifications proposed by such institution, [until June 30, 2023, and for  
321 up to fifteen new programs of higher learning in any academic year or  
322 any program modifications proposed by such institution on and after  
323 July 1, 2023,] provided (1) the institution maintains eligibility to  
324 participate in financial aid programs governed by Title IV, Part B of the  
325 Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended from time to time, (2) the  
326 United States Department of Education has not determined that the  
327 institution has a financial responsibility score that is less than 1.5 for the  
328 most recent fiscal year for which the data necessary for determining the  
329 score is available, and (3) the institution has been located in the state and  
330 accredited as a degree-granting institution in good standing for ten  
331 years or more by a regional accrediting association recognized by the  
332 Secretary of the United States Department of Education and maintains  
333 such accreditation status. Each institution that is exempt from program  
334 approval by the Office of Higher Education under this subsection shall  
335 [file with the office (A) on and after July 1, 2023, an application for  
336 approval of any new program of higher learning in excess of fifteen new  
337 programs in any academic year, (B) a program actions form, as created  
338 by the office, prior to students enrolling in any new program of higher  
339 learning or any existing program subject to a program modification, and  
340 (C) not later than July first, and annually thereafter, (i) until June 30,  
341 2024, a list and brief description of any new programs of higher learning  
342 introduced by the institution in the preceding academic year and any  
343 existing programs of higher learning discontinued by the institution in  
344 the preceding academic year, (ii)] (A) on or before the last date of each

345 semester, but not less frequently than annually, update the credentials  
 346 database, established pursuant to the provisions of section 10a-35b, with  
 347 any new programs of higher learning that were introduced or any  
 348 existing programs of higher learning that were modified or  
 349 discontinued during such semester, and (B) not later than July 1, 2024,  
 350 and annually thereafter, file with the office (i) the institution's current  
 351 program approval process and all actions of the governing board  
 352 concerning approval of any new program of higher learning, and [(iii)]  
 353 (ii) the institution's financial responsibility composite score, as  
 354 determined by the United States Department of Education, for the most  
 355 recent fiscal year for which the data necessary for determining the score  
 356 is available."

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	July 1, 2023	10a-174
Sec. 2	July 1, 2023	10a-173
Sec. 3	July 1, 2023	4-89(f)
Sec. 4	July 1, 2023	10a-34(l)