



21 Talcott Notch Road
Farmington, CT 06032
860.678.0005
theccic.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Jennifer Widness, CCIC
Ph: (860) 331-3948
widnessj@theccic.org

CCIC Statement on CT's Free Public College Proposal

H.B. No. 5371: FREE 2 START SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM AND THE FREE 2 FINISH SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

CCIC recognizes that providing access to quality higher education is critical to a healthy state economy that requires a highly educated workforce, however, we are very concerned that if adopted HB 5371 will have negative consequences for Connecticut students, institutions, and the state's economy.

Connecticut's independent colleges play a significant role in educating our state's citizenry. We enroll nearly 50,000 undergraduate students, just shy of 30% of the total, and award nearly 45% of the bachelor's degrees earned. We award the [bulk of degrees earned in STEM fields](#) – which the Commission on Fiscal Stability & Economic Growth just reported Connecticut desperately needs to grow our economy—and we award more than half of the bachelor's degrees earned by minority students.

We call on legislators to continue to support access and choice to all of our higher education institutions by reinstating funding for the state's need based financial aid program that has faced [devastating reductions over the last eight years](#).

Further, we caution legislators about the unintended consequences that a Free Public College program may have for some of the smaller private colleges in your communities that may be devastated by this proposal. Our neighbors in New York have reported that many private, non-profit institutions that enroll a majority of New Yorkers have faced enrollment declines causing employment reductions after just one year of Free College in that state.

Schools such as Albertus Magnus College, Mitchell College, the University of St. Joseph and Goodwin College would similarly be impacted by this proposal in Connecticut. These schools are anchors in their communities, enroll a large percentage of Connecticut residents and graduate the majority on time -- at virtually no cost to the state. Why would we want to enact proposals that could threaten their livelihood?

We await further details on how this program would work, how it might be funded and look forward to working with members of the Higher Education Committee on this issue.