

Testimony of Margaret Malaspina on **Senate Bill 844 “An Act Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Higher Education”**

Thursday, February 28, 2013 at 1:00 p.m. in Room 1E of the LOB in Hartford, CT

Good afternoon Co-Chairs of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, State Senator Bye, State Representative Willis, and all the members of the Committee. My name is Margaret Malaspina, and I am the Director of Student Financial Assistance at Capital Community College in Hartford. I am here today to speak to the Governor’s Scholarship, one of the Governor’s recommendations for the 2013-2014 academic year.

Capital Community College currently serves 4,394 students in credit-bearing courses, 3,065 of whom receive student aid on the basis of financial need. The Connecticut Aid to Public College Students program, or CAPCS, has for years been an invaluable source of help to our students as they work toward their educational objectives. The Governor’s budget recommendation is to replace the existing state student aid programs, including CAPCS, with the Governor’s Scholarship.

As proposed in Senate Bill 844, the Governor’s Scholarship aims at promoting persistence and completion of degree programs, which is a laudable objective. As a community college administrator, however, I see several unintended consequences that cause considerable concern among my counterparts and me.

My first major concern is that only full-time students would be eligible for the Governor’s Scholarship, whereas the existing state program is open to part-time students. I would like to give you an idea of who these students are who will no longer be eligible because they don’t attend full-time. I have drawn these facts from our most recently completed academic year (2011-2012) and they pertain only to part-time students who enrolled on at least a half-time basis and received grants from the state student aid program.

There were 289 such students who received CAPCS grants.

245 (85%) were adult students.

68 (24%) were married with children; 52 (18%) were single parents.

121 (42%) were in career programs, including 28 nursing students.

149 (52%) had a GPA of 3.0 or better; 66 (29%) qualified for the Dean’s List.

103 (36%) were too well-off to qualify for a federal Pell grant, but still demonstrated financial need as Capital students.

The average state grant award to all these students was only \$1,224; we were able to help them reach their goals at a relatively modest cost per student.

Finally, only 36 of these students, or 12%, also used federal student loans. One possible consequence of the Governor’s Scholarship is that more of these students would go into debt for their Capital programs.

My second major concern is that the Governor’s Scholarship would eliminate the possibility of using state funds, as we now can under CAPCS, to provide part-time jobs to students with financial need. Research has shown that students who work on campus are more likely to complete their degrees. Furthermore, our student workers play a vital role in providing necessary services, such as tutoring and library assistance, to all of our students.

Thank you.