

Monica Maldonado Testimony

- Good Evening Appropriations Committee Members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Community Colleges. My name is Monica Maldonado; I am the Chair of the Student Advisory Committee to the Board of Regents and student leader at Gateway Community College. I represent the student voice of our twelve Community Colleges and I am here to talk to you about the importance of making the decision to become a student as a means to transform ones life.
- Those of us faced with obstacles, financial or otherwise, yet remain determined and eager to succeed, find themselves welcomed by the open doors of community college.
- Over one hundred years ago, the American Association of Community Colleges, understood that in order to develop a more skilled workforce, the key to our country's economic strength, was to form community college. Community colleges have a rich history. Continued federal and state funding will provide opportunities for higher education and economic equality.
- Without community college, some students would lack the preparation and otherwise find difficulty in accessing higher education. The importance and impact of community college cannot be overstated.
- As a long-term investment that pays for itself... community college graduates, transfers, and certificate holders will now have the option to go on to universities or enter the workforce to better employment opportunities. The more you learn, the more you earn. Investing in community college students will increase the quality of individuals lives, giving them the chance of becoming homeowners, affording healthcare, and raising

children that will attend college; they can start successful businesses or climb the corporate ladder, and ultimately become beneficial contributors to society.

- Additionally, I would also like to bring to your attention the computation metric concerning the graduation rate for First-Time-Full-Time students. The current 50-year old federal method downplays the effectiveness of our institutions. The fact that students are taking longer to complete their post-secondary education emphasizes the inappropriateness of this metric. If students transfer prior to earning a degree or certificate their success goes unaccounted.
- According to an article published in the Connecticut Mirror by William Gammell of the Board of Regents, those students negatively affect the graduation rate. Gammell also states “To get a true indication of student success and institutional effectiveness, graduation rates need to be supplemented with other important indicators of college progress, such as college persistence, transfer and mobility, and certificate and degree completion”.
- In closing, I ask that our state legislators dedicate resources to advance efforts in finding a modern solution to more accurately reflect student success. I’d like to see Connecticut pioneering the change that will transform the lens in which the Department of Education and the New England Commission of Higher Education views graduation rates.
- Thank you for letting me share my views with you today.