



ALBERTUS MAGNUS COLLEGE
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

**Testimony for the
Judiciary Committee
Marc M. Camille, Ed.D., President
Albertus Magnus College
March 15, 2021**

On behalf of Albertus Magnus College (Albertus), I am submitting testimony in strong support of **H.B. 5125: AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF IMMUNITY FROM CIVIL LIABILITY FOR ENTITIES THAT HAVE OPERATED PURSUANT TO HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.**

Over the past year, like its Connecticut public and private sister institutions, Albertus has worked diligently to implement the robust public health guidance that the State of Connecticut has issued to safely support the re-opening of higher education institutions. Beyond the Re-Opening Higher Education Report issued on May 6th by Governor Lamont, fourteen additional memorandums have been issued by the Department of Public Health for higher education along with DECD's various sector rules for operations.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the leadership of Albertus has prioritized the safety and well-being of its students, employees, and the extended community. To comply with State protocols and in support of its safety commitments, Albertus has invested more than \$222,100 to provide comprehensive testing of students, faculty and staff; purchased over \$67,400 in cleaning supplies and equipment and other apparatus to accommodate social distancing requirements. The College has identified and maintains spaces dedicated to quarantine and isolation of students that have tested positive and has spent over \$3,000 in meals and beverages to feed quarantined students. Albertus conducted more than 2,300 tests in the fall and 3,400+ tests in the spring to-date, with only 49 total positive cases in the fall and only 38 so far this spring term. Albertus faculty and staff have worked tirelessly and selflessly, with extremely limited resources, to do all we can to protect and care for our students, employees, and our neighboring community members.

Recognizing the unusual potential for exposure on a college and university campus, the Governor's Reopen CT Higher Education Committee recommended the state offer an appropriate, limited, "safe harbor" from liability for those institutions that comply with the state guidance. The bill before you today aligns with this recommendation and is intended to allow for a temporary, targeted safe harbor for private entities, such as private, non-profit colleges, without shielding an institution from gross negligence or willful misconduct.

Some may argue that any institution that follows public health standards will prevail in litigation, and thus a safe harbor is not needed. However, the cost of successfully defending lawsuits will nonetheless be very high at a time when schools like Albertus are already coping with a sudden increase in expenses and significant lost revenue. Albertus has suffered losses totaling in excess of \$2,150,000 over the past twelve months due to declined enrollments, withdrawals, and refunds of room and board. There also will be additional costs associated with re-opening for the fall 2021 semester. Federal assistance has been immensely helpful, but it has not covered even one-third of these losses.

Moreover, insurance for pandemic risks is limited or unavailable, creating significant financial exposure.

For the reasons outlined above, we ask for the Committee's strong support of this bill.

On behalf of Albertus Magnus College,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Camille".

Marc M. Camille, Ed.D.
President