

Cameron Clarke

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History major, senior

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France, and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Cameron Clarke. I am a senior History major at Central Connecticut State University, and I am here today to ask you to prioritize increased funding for our colleges. As a student who took dual-enrollment classes in high school, and then attended both Manchester Community College and CCSU, I have had the opportunity to see first-hand the benefits of increased access to and funding for higher education throughout the Connecticut system. Through day-to-day academic life and extracurricular involvement, I have had the privilege of interacting with students from countless walks of life, many of whom rely on the support of the members of this committee and your colleagues in the State Legislature at large to allow them to pursue their goals of achieving an education befitting of the 21st century. Without the continued and increased support of your committee, many of these individuals would have been unable to make ends meet and as such would have been deprived of such an opportunity. As many of you know, the reliable and thorough funding of equitable admission opportunities is only one part of the puzzle for higher education funding. The services provided for students, ranging from superior technical support in and out of the classroom, to mental and physical health counseling, to on-ground funding for extracurriculars all play an indispensable role in benefitting the students at Connecticut's colleges and universities, and cuts to any of these areas would prove a detriment to the lifeblood of our institutions. Rather, as the ongoing pandemic has revealed, all of these services are more essential than ever before, and simply funding them to existing levels – while acceptable for a more ordinary year – would be a disservice to the students. As many of the esteemed members of this committee are aware, this pandemic has brought to light inherent shortcomings across the board, many of which lay unaddressed for years. In order to help Connecticut build back better, this committee must keep an eye on the future for our colleges, in terms of not just more equitable funding and enrollment, but also funding for a myriad of technical and student support services, which have been indispensable due to the

circumstances of largely online education. I, like many of my peers, can attest to the fact that the services of our colleges have been strained by this pandemic, and in order to maintain the proud history of Connecticut's universities as a model for the nation, this committee must double down on providing for the students of Connecticut's colleges, so that we may, in turn, provide for the state's future. I thank the esteemed members of this committee for this opportunity to address them, and I trust our colleges will be able to rely on your continued support and priority funding.