



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE
February 16, 2023**

Amy Dowell, Executive Director

Co-Chairs Slap and Haddad, Vice Chairs Maher and Rochelle, Ranking Members Kelly and Haines, and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee—thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of [S.B. No. 922, *An Act Prohibiting an Institution of Higher Education from Withholding Transcripts*](#). My name is Amy Dowell, and I am the Executive Director of Education Reform Now CT (ERN CT).

Today in Connecticut, if a college student has any amount of debt—even for something unrelated to tuition, like a library fee or a parking fine—an institution of higher education can hold the student's transcript for credits that he or she has already earned as a means of debt collection. We call it the “Transcript Trap.” This punitive and excessive practice prevents students who have run into financial hardship from pursuing further educational opportunities or productive jobs. It transforms a road bump into a roadblock—significantly impeding the success of students who are struggling.

The Transcript Trap is also discriminatory, disproportionately harming students of limited means, who can be thrown off track for the rest of their lives by being unable to pay off small amounts of debt. Colleges are supposed to be vehicles of upward mobility. But by targeting students who need to accumulate debts in order to invest in their own futures, the Transcript Trap perpetuates cycles of poverty in our state.

Withholding transcripts is also impractical. A student who owes money to a college needs a plan that leads to repayment, not a penalty that will prevent it.

Last year, [our research](#) identified that 100% of Connecticut institutions of higher education explicitly engage in this practice.¹ This body then advanced a similar bill, which unfortunately was never called for final passage. This year, I sincerely hope that the discriminatory and illogical Transcript Trap has finally met its end. Please support SB 922.

¹ “End the Transcript Trap” (ERN CT, 2022). Last retrieved February 2023 at https://f618d851-8e74-4de9-9eb1-372f70db03ee.usrfiles.com/uqd/f618d8_5345fd126b85498f849b411aa55130fa.pdf.



About Education Reform Now CT

The state chapter of a national organization and affiliate of DFER CT, Education Reform Now CT is a 501(c)(3) that operates as a think tank and policy advocate, promoting great educational opportunities and achievement for all by increasing equity, protecting civil rights, and strengthening the social safety net.