



Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

H.B. 5375: An Act Concerning the Connecticut Workforce Advancement Grants for Education and Women in Transition Programs.

Submitted by: Catherine Bailey and Madeline Granato,  
Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund

March 1, 2016

The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. For decades, CWEALF has been vocal in advocating for strategies to increase access for women and girls to post-secondary education and training opportunities that pay a living wage, most recently through our leading the Campaign for a Working Connecticut (CWCT).

The CWCT is a state-wide coalition of education and training providers, workforce investment boards and advocates whose mission is to promote the state's economic competitiveness through the development of sustainable, effective workplace solutions to increase workers' skills and advance families to self-sufficiency.

We urge your support for *H.B. 5375: An Act Concerning the Connecticut Workforce Advancement Grants for Education and Women in Transition Program*.

H.B. 5375 will provide additional resources to the Women in Transition (WIT) program, which assists low-wage single mothers to earn a college degree. The Women in Transition program helps women not only obtain the post-secondary education necessary to secure a sufficient paying job, but also instills the importance of education onto their children, become active participants in their communities and ultimately break the cycle of poverty.

H.B. 5375 will also give additional financial support to the Connecticut Workforce Advancement Grants for Education (CT-WAGE), which grants single male or female parents in low-income jobs the ability to complete their college degrees online. The model of CT-WAGE accommodates the needs of working parents by allowing students to enroll in classes online, which substantially reduces the student's cost for childcare and need for transportation to a college campus.

Charter Oak State College's Women in Transition and Connecticut Workforce Advancement Grants for Education represent two post-secondary education programs that are truly supportive of the diversity of the needs of adult students, especially low-income women and single mothers.

Connecticut women currently constitute 69% of the state's low-wage workforce<sup>1</sup> and head nearly 172,000 family households – about 23% of which earn incomes that fall below the federal poverty level.<sup>2</sup> In order to break the cycle of poverty and achieve self-sufficiency, access to vital educational services supportive of a student's personal and family needs is essential.

To truly restore Connecticut's economic competitiveness, we must continue to invest in developing workers' skills to meet the demands of a changing workforce. H.B. 5375 will provide financial resources to Charter Oak State College's Women in Transition and Connecticut Workforce Advancement Grants for Education – two programs that are fundamental to the advancement of low-wage earners in our state.

Thank you.

---

<sup>1</sup> National Women's Law Center. (2014). Underpaid and Overloaded: women in low-wage jobs.

<[http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final\\_nwlc\\_lowwagereport2014.pdf](http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final_nwlc_lowwagereport2014.pdf)>

<sup>2</sup> National Partnership for Women and Families. (2015). Connecticut Women and the Wage Gap.

<<http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/workplace-fairness/fair-pay/9-2015-ct-wage-gap.pdf>>