



State of Connecticut

African-American Affairs Commission

State Capitol

210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509

Hartford, CT 06106

860-240-8555

February 27, 2014

Good morning Senator Cassano, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. My name is Glenn A. Cassis and I am the Executive Director of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC). The mission of the Commission is to promote and improve the economic, educational, health, safety and political well-being of the African-American community in Connecticut. I wish to submit testimony in support of the **Governor's Bill No. 5050 - An Act Improving College Completion**

The AAAC strongly believes that education is at the core of Connecticut's social, economic and overall wellbeing. If we expect residents to meet the demands of the 21st century economy, we must do whatever we can to assure that residents have the opportunity to receive a 21st century education. A 21st century education will provide the tools necessary for Connecticut to be competitive nationally and internationally. According to the Lumina Foundation for Education report ***A Stronger Nation Through Higher Education*** nationally the Great Recession in December 2007 to January 2010 resulted in the economy losing 5.6 million jobs for Americans with a high school education or less. Jobs requiring an associate degree or some college declined by 1.75 million. Conversely for Americans with a bachelor's degree or above jobs actually grew by 187,000¹. Jobs for those with bachelor's degrees or above slowed but did not decline. Since the end of the recession jobs requiring an associate degree or some college have grown by 1.6 million, nearly recovering to pre-recession levels. Jobs for bachelor's degrees have accelerated adding 2 million

¹ A Stronger Nation Through Higher Education 2013, Dewayne Matthews, page 2.
Our Mission

To improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut

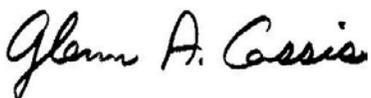
new jobs during the recovery. The opposite is true for those with a high school diploma or less where an additional 230,000 jobs were lost. In the 21st century low-skill jobs are gone for good and the future belongs to those with college-level degrees.

Based on data published by the Organisation^[sic] for Economic Co-operation and Development, the US ranks 13th among develop nations with a college attainment rate of only 38.7% among adults (age 24 – 64). The US needs to be at 60% by 2025 to regain its competitive ranking in the world economy. Currently 46.4% of Connecticut's adults have a postsecondary degree. To reach the 60% goal, it is projected that Connecticut will need to add more than 152,000 degrees to the current 881,600. There are nearly 366,000 adults in Connecticut who have gone to college but lack a two- or four-year degree. According to experts from the Center on Education and Workforce at Georgetown University by the year 2018, 359,000 of the expected 564,000 job vacancies in Connecticut will require postsecondary credentials. The Governor's proposal to encourage previously enrolled postsecondary students to complete their degrees, offers another strategy for the state to reach its goal of 60% by 2025. The **Go Back to Get Ahead** program will make an impact on providing a skilled workforce required to be economically competitive. This incentive will assist many adults who need a restart.

Among Connecticut's adult African-Americans only 26.7% have degrees². If passed, the AAAC will work diligently with the General Assembly to encourage the African-American community to take advantage of this program. This initiative will provide an important lift to many in the community.

Thank you for your time.

Submitted by,



Glenn A. Cassis

Executive Director

² Ibid, page 38