



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Connecticut General Assembly  
Higher Education and Employee Advancement Committee  
Commissioner Charlene M. Russell-Tucker  
February 20, 2025

Good morning, Representative Haddad, Senator Slap, Representative Bronko, Senator Martin, and members of the Higher Education and Employee Advancement Committee. As the Commissioner of the Department of Education (Department) I am sorry that I am unable to join you today, however, I would like to offer you the following written testimony in strong support of **Governor's HB 6869, An Act Expanding Dual Credit Opportunities.**

Dual credit programs provide opportunities for students to take classes in which they can receive both high school and college credit simultaneously. This not only gives students a head start on their path toward a postsecondary credential, but also reduces the cost associated with earning that credential. Dual credit courses can be academically focused or career oriented. Completing these courses when in high school can increase student engagement in high school and also increase their likelihood of completing a 2- or 4-year degree or an industry-recognized credential leading to employment in high-demand fields.

Evidence shows that students with early college experiences are 38 percent more likely than their peers to enroll in college immediately after high school and 53 percent more likely to remain enrolled after one year, demonstrating that dual credit is a powerful tool for engaging students and keeping them connected to learning as young adults.

The Department has invested approximately \$9 million of COVID relief funds in both institutions of higher education (IHEs) and school districts to strengthen partnerships, grow offerings, increase family/student outreach, and attain program quality accreditation. From 2019-20 to 2023-24, the total number of dual credit college courses completed by 11th and 12th grade high school students has grown from 31,078 to 35,799 – an increase of over 4,700 courses or 15 percent. In terms of an unduplicated number of students, 26.1 percent of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders (or 20,918 students) earned at least three college credits in high school. This is up around 3,400 students from 2021-22 when 22.3 percent of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders (17,552 students) earned at least three college credits. During the same period, there was also an increase in the percentage of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders from high need backgrounds<sup>1</sup> who earned at least three college credits; it grew from 12.8 percent (4,780 students) in 2021-22 to 15.8 percent (6,535 students) in 2023-24.

This legislation and the proposed funding in FY 27 of \$7.5 M, under the Governor's leadership, represents a focused collaboration between IHEs, the Department, and, in some cases, workforce partners to advance the state's student population to be college and career ready. By working together - educators, school administrators, higher education partners, legislators, local businesses, and community partners - and supporting all learners with the chance to earn academic- or career-oriented college credits while still in high school, we are opening doors to a

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<sup>1</sup> A student with high needs is one who is either an English learner/multilingual learner, has a disability, or is from a low-income family.

universe of opportunities and brighter futures, especially for those from historically underserved backgrounds.

We fully support this proposal and thank you for your consideration.