



Mark E. Ojakian
President

August 22, 2018

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
United State Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos,

In 2016, four of our community colleges were selected along with 63 others nationally to be part of the Second Chance Pell pilot program which allowed eligible incarcerated Americans access to Pell funding while incarcerated. As part of the pilot, Anuntuck, Middlesex, Quinebaug and Three Rivers Community Colleges began offering combinations of classroom-based instruction and online education, at nearby corrections facilities.

CSCU has had tremendous success with this pilot. It has helped 962 students pursue a postsecondary education, with 61 of them having completed a certificate or degree after this spring semester. We have students who have gone from prison to working in great paying advanced manufacturing job in a matter of months. This pilot is giving people a second chance to break the cycle of incarceration, to rejoin our communities, and to build a new life for themselves and their families.

I have had the pleasure of meeting many of these students and their families at their graduations. Each ceremony demonstrated the impact these educational opportunities have not just on the students, but their extended families as well as our communities and state as a whole.

I strongly urge you and your department to continue the Second Chance Pell pilot. We need to find a permanent solution in the next reauthorization of the Higher Education Act so that students and families know this resource will be available for them from year to year. I stand ready to help you and our federal delegation fight for an authorization for a national program so that the life changing opportunities we have seen thrive here in Connecticut can be replicated across the country.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark E. Ojakian". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark E. Ojakian
President, Connecticut State Colleges & Universities