

June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025

The Honourable Paul Calandra  
*Minister of Education*

The Honourable Nolan Quinn  
*Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security*

Dear Ministers,

I am writing to you on behalf of the College Student Alliance to express our views on Bill 33, *Supporting Children and Students Act 2025*, particularly in relation to its implications for college student admissions and student fees. First, on behalf of college students, we appreciate the government's efforts to enhance fairness, transparency, and accountability in the post-secondary education system. We would like to offer a balanced perspective on the proposed legislation and encourage further consultation with students and sector stakeholders in the next stages of its development.

#### *Admissions*

The introduction of merit-based admissions outlined in Schedule 3, Section 16.0.2 presents several potential benefits for students. The emphasis on fairness and transparency is appreciated, as it suggests that admissions decisions will be grounded in objective criteria such as academic performance and relevant experience. The requirement for colleges and universities to publish admission criteria and processes helps to further enhance transparency; helping applicants better understand expectations and prepare accordingly.

While a merit-based system can offer benefits, we encourage the development of a comprehensive, transparent, and evidence-informed process for defining "merit" to help prevent unintended consequences for diversity, equity, and inclusion objectives. Additionally, we urge careful consideration for students facing exceptional circumstances; unclear guidelines for mid-program changes due to unforeseen issues could create uncertainty and hinder educational progression. As the framework evolves, it will be important to ensure that institutions retain sufficient autonomy to design admissions policies that reflect their student populations, while aligning with overarching principles of fairness and accessibility.

#### *Research Security*

As you know, post-secondary institutions are grappling with significant funding challenges, compounded by a historic underfunding context, tuition freezes, and federal limits on international student enrollment. These circumstances have created pressure on colleges, prompting them to make cuts to various programs and services.

Consequently, there are concerns that initiatives like the mandated development and implementation of a Research Security Plan may not receive adequate funding, potentially forcing institutions to further

redirect essential resources away from vital student services. As a result of these ongoing financial constraints, reductions in student support are already occurring, threatening the overall quality of education and the student experience.

### *Fees*

We appreciate Section 21.1's clause on standardizing public reporting of institutional fees, as it aims to increase financial transparency and empower students to better understand how their money is being spent. However, if passed, this Section would grant the Lieutenant Governor in Council authority to regulate student fees at colleges and universities. Although it appears not to explicitly allow students to opt-out of fees, the provision that permits the government to determine refundable fees raises serious concerns about a potential return to the 2019 Students Choice Initiative (SCI) which was widely criticized for undermining student representation and essential services. In the end, that initiative was struck down as unconstitutional by the courts.

Subsequent government regulations that limit fees for student organizations could jeopardize their funding, threatening the sustainability of critical student-led initiatives and services that are essential for a vibrant campus life. Examples include, counselling and mental health supports, which are more critical than ever before, tutoring and academic supports, and cultural and diversity programs.

### *Conclusion*

In summary, Bill 33, if passed, aims for more transparency and accountability in post-secondary education which, in principle, CSA supports. However, we want to strongly emphasize the importance of considering the challenges that may arise, particularly regarding admission regulations and the potential impact of fee regulations on student services.

While the College Student Alliance, which represents tens of thousands of Ontario college students, was not consulted on this proposed legislation, we strongly urge engagement with student stakeholders during the development and implementation of the regulatory framework to prevent unanticipated consequences. The College Student Alliance is committed to assisting the Ministry in gathering essential student perspectives on any and all initiatives that affect the student experience. We appreciate your attention to these matters and look forward to working collaboratively to enhance the post-secondary education landscape in Ontario.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JB' or similar, representing Jasmine Bates.

Jasmine Bates, President  
College Student Alliance

CC: Z. Kroeker  
CSA Board Directors