



University of Connecticut
Office of the President

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Education Committee Public Hearing
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Testimony
By
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Senate Bill 830, An Act Concerning the Governor's Recommendations Regarding Education

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding Senate Bill 830, *An Act Concerning the Governor's Recommendations Regarding Education*.

The University has concerns about section 23 of the bill which would transfer hiring authority from the University of Connecticut and the other constituent units of the state system of higher education to the Office of Policy and Management (OPM).

Shifting control of hiring decisions to OPM would be counterproductive as the University strives to fulfill its land-grant mission. It is also unwarranted. With only 35% of UConn's budget coming from state resources at the Storrs and regional campuses and only 19.5% at the Health Center, it is not reasonable for the OPM to have this control. Having the University maintain the authority to manage personnel decisions is appropriate and necessary, and enables UConn to adapt quickly and prudently to meet the academic, residential, health and life-safety needs of our students, patients, faculty, staff and neighbors. UConn's successes over the recent past have come about after personnel responsibility was granted by the General Assembly to the University in the early 1990s and this is no time to move backward.

Decision-making is most effective when located at the level closest to those affected, which in our case, are our students, patients and faculty. UConn's core mission is teaching, research, clinical care and public service. We are best positioned to understand what is needed and to determine which and when positions should be filled to ensure:

- courses are offered in a manner that allows students to graduate in a timely fashion;
- our patients at the Health Center receive the highest level of care; and

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- essential services are provided to students, patients, faculty and staff and
- our research commitments to granting agencies are met.

Adding an additional layer of approval to the University's hiring decisions will prove time consuming and inefficient and would compromise our ability to meet our obligations to the many constituencies we serve.

In a time of continued enrollment growth --of more than 6,000 new students since 1995 -- we need hiring flexibility more than ever to make sure we have enough faculty to meet student needs. UConn has experienced increasing faculty-student ratios. In fact, we have been struggling to keep our faculty to student ratio at 17:1 which is already higher than that of our peer institutions. At the beginning of each semester last minute hiring decisions, particularly for part-time faculty members, are inevitable given our need to offer courses to more than 29,000 students. If these hiring decisions had to be approved in Hartford, it would likely add weeks or months to the hiring process which could significantly impact academic schedules.

The University and its Health Center annually receive close to \$200 million in federal research grants. It is imperative that we have the flexibility to hire research assistants and staff to support these grants to ensure the University does not jeopardize critical federal funding.

Non-faculty positions are also critically important since the University operates the equivalent of a mid-sized city and a hospital that are open 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Adequate levels of staff are needed to allow us meet the residential, health and life-safety needs of our students and patients. The tremendous growth in enrollment has driven concomitant growth in our residential responsibilities. In the past decade, the University's number of students living on campus has increased by 4,264 students, from 7,626 in fall 1998 to 11,890 students in fall 2008. With this significant increase in residential activity, student health and safety require appropriate levels of maintenance/janitorial, dining, security and health care services. In addition, because there is no town utility or service infrastructure, the University operates its own water system, sewer system, police department and fire department and extends some of these services to the town of Mansfield. All of these services are critical to safe and secure operations—every parent of a UConn student would call these services “essential.” We simply cannot meet the needs of our growing student population without replacing employees who provide critical services in a timely manner. At the Health Center, we could find ourselves unable to meet patients needs, thus jeopardizing patient care responsibilities.

For all of these reasons, we respectfully ask the Committee to remove section 23 from SB 830.

Again, thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony and for your continued support of the University of Connecticut.