



The Higher Education & Workforce Advancement Committee

Testimony by
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Good morning Senator Handley, Representative Willis, and members of the Higher Education and Workforce Advancement Committee.

I am Ed Klonoski, President of Charter Oak State College, and I am here today with Shirley Adams, our Provost, to speak about two bills currently before you: Raised Bill No. 6380, An Act Concerning Graduate Degree Programs at Charter Oak State College and Raised Bill 977, An Act Concerning the Higher Education Matching Grant Program.

Charter Oak has been working to add graduate degrees to its offerings for the past five years. Our graduates have been requesting an online master's degree, our Board of Trustees has been encouraging us to develop an appropriate offering, and the Charter Oak State College Foundation has been eager to provide financial support for this effort. We just recently received the support of the Board of Governors of Higher Education.

Charter Oak State College's Strategic Plan makes this a priority and during our last reaccreditation review we discussed this goal in our self-study and with our visiting team. As Connecticut's online public college, Charter Oak serves working adults who require a degree, as well as certificates and/ or credentials. Our method of program delivery is online courses because we see education as an activity not a location. The master's degree we imagine would be an online degree, serving

Connecticut's workforce to help working adults move up the career ladder in their industry.

The process for developing a master's degree requires that the College add language to its Statute giving us the latitude to offer graduate degrees. Even if we are fortunate to achieve that language revision during this session, we still face a series of additional steps. Any program that we propose must be reviewed by the Department of Higher Education. That means that we must do a survey to demonstrate need; we must demonstrate that our curriculum, faculty, research resources, and our student supports are appropriate; and we must have a business plan that documents how the College will meet the economic challenges of such a program.

Adding the capacity to offer master's degrees also requires that we present the New England Association of Schools and College (NEASC), our regional accreditor, with a report that defends what they call "a substantive change" in our mission.

The statutory language change that we seek today is the first step in a lengthy process.

At this time, I want to thank the Committee Attorneys who helped to develop the correct language for this bill.

I want to just say a few words about the importance of the State Endowed Matching Grant Program which has had a significant impact on the College's Foundation and our fundraising efforts. Prior to the passage of the 1997 legislation, Charter Oak State College's Foundation had an endowment of only \$30,000. With the enactment of the 1997 legislation, the State sent a clear message to all of the constituent units: fundraising is important and if you are successful, you will be rewarded.

Although over the years economic considerations have caused a decrease in the amount allocated for each of the public constituent units, our donors continue to be motivated based on the expectation that their contribution will be matched by the State of Connecticut.

We understand that given the current economic crisis you are not likely to find the resources to support the State Match for this biennium. But, we want you to know that the Endowed Legislation is vital to our fundraising efforts. The Endowment Funds are a significant part of our financial aid efforts for needy students and for the Women in Transition Program. The Charter Oak State College Foundation has raised over \$400,000 in its endowed fund for scholarships for needy students and the WIT Endowed Fund has raised over \$230,000 to support at least four participants each year. Without that legislation, this might not have been possible for a small institution like Charter Oak.

We credit the General Assembly on its vision, innovation and commitment to Connecticut's public institutions of higher education and appreciate your continued support of the Endowed Legislation.

I appreciate your time and can answer any questions.