

Dear Representative Willis:

I am writing you today in reference to the Bill to Reorganize Higher Education which will have a public hearing on March 10. I write you specifically as a student of Southern Connecticut State University.

I am a graduate student in the English Department. I study Creative Writing in the new Master of Fine Arts program. The program is unique in Connecticut; it is the only full-residency program in the state. I have received numerous opportunities for personal and professional growth during my time at Southern. In fact, I earned my BA at Southern, where I returned after a long absence. I am living proof that Southern creates opportunities for advancement in a supportive, nurturing environment. I recently placed in a national writing contest that received hundreds of entries, and I am receiving good feedback on my work from national literary journals. None of this would have been possible without what I have learned at Southern. In fact, I now also teach freshman English for the department, and I love giving back to students so much like myself. This bill would group the CSU schools with the community colleges, and create a new board that could take away up to 15% of our funding. This restructuring would not benefit either the CSU schools or the community colleges. I am concerned, especially, that the CSU universities would be viewed as simply four-year community colleges. This is not to knock the community colleges at all; in fact, I have attended both Housatonic in Bridgeport and Gateway in New Haven at various points. However, the university environment is different, particularly because it offers graduate programs like the one I am in now. In my specialty alone, I would have had to move out of state to attend a full-residency program. Instead, Southern had a program that allowed me to live in my home state.

I am working on a collection of short stories about my hometown of Bridgeport, CT. I hope to show the world that Bridgeport is a vibrant, complex place that deserves attention. How amazing that I am able to work on it right here in Connecticut!

Please do not vote for this bill. This restructuring will not be advantageous to the CSU schools. Reduced funding will result in larger class sizes, and possibly whole programs being cut. I can't stand for that, and I hope you won't either.

Best,
Jessica Forcier