

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Public Hearing on S.B. No. 1011
An Act Concerning Reorganization of Connecticut Public Higher Education

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Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Tony Rosso, I live in New Haven, and I'm a registered voter.

I've taught in the English department at Southern CSU since 1987 and I am here to speak against the current bill for reorganization of Connecticut higher education.

Or I should say reorganization of 2/3rds of higher education, since the Governor's plan leaves UConn out of the equation.

This exclusion is a problem because no matter how you slice the pie between the Community Colleges and CSU (not to mention Charter Oak and the DHE), UConn retains its identity and CSU's identity is merged into other units.

S.B. 1011 contains no provisions that legally guarantee the autonomy and distinct academic mission of CSU.

Nor does it include any provisions that include CSU faculty in the shaping and decision-making process of reorganization. There is no faculty advisory group or any place for permanent faculty representation on the Board of Regents.

In fact, the bill calls for the creation of a Board of Regents and a CEO before it has any concrete plans for how reorganization will proceed. That's not good planning.

The plan does call for a redirection of funds from the CSU Systems Office to classroom instruction. This change is long overdue and we support it.

I've been in the CSU-AAUP, the faculty union, since the late 1980s and we've argued for years against administrative bloat in the Central Office because it hurts the educational mission of the university.

Last night our union met with Mike Meoti, the Chair of the Dept of Higher Ed, a bright well-meaning guy who said he supported a "minimalist" structure for the new Board of Regents to avoid repeating the problems at the CSU Central Office.

Great idea but there is nothing in the current bill to guarantee such a structure.

We cannot sign off on a nebulous plan that creates a distant bureaucracy under a Board of Regents that does not adequately represent the stakeholders it oversees.

Let me close with a comment on what makes CSU a unique institution.

CSU is **not** only a teaching or job-training institution. We must engage in research and creative activity as part of the conditions of employment. We can't get hired, promoted, and tenured and we can't teach our classes without doing scholarship. These requirements are built into our collective bargaining contract.

We thus resemble faculty at UCONN who engage in research and scholarship and also faculty at the Community Colleges whose primary mission is teaching. But we have a distinct identity and our own niche in Connecticut higher education. We provide students with the best of both worlds.

As my grandfather the car mechanic put it: "if it ain't broke, it don't need fixing."

Our message is SLOW DOWN. Let's not undermine a system that works.

CSU provides more than job training. We are asking for your help in making sure students gain the knowledge they need to understand political debates, scientific phenomenon, the world they live in, and to be prepared for the responsibilities of democratic citizenship.