

To Representative Willis, Senator Bye, Ranking Members and Higher Education committee members,

My name is Zak Leavy and I come to testify before you in opposition to S.B. 1011, the reorganization of the CSU system. I am a senior at Eastern Connecticut State University and reorganization of the system can lead to tuition increases and cuts that will lead to less full-time faculty. Low tuition and quality full-time faculty, which keeps class sizes small, is the cornerstone of what Eastern offers.

An increase in tuition would be preventative to many students that depend on the low cost of attending Eastern to gain their college degree without crippling debt after graduation. Since it could lead to less students being able to attend there would mean less money coming into the school. While tuition increases can be preventative, the damage also transfers to students that are able to absorb rate increases.

A huge advantage Eastern has is its small class sizes and the availability to develop academic relationships with the professors. When I first got out of high school, I attended a large university which had classes of more than 150 students. At that university, I was told on the first day that if I had questions about the class or assignments, I would need to see a TA rather than the professor. While there is nothing wrong with large class sizes, as an 18 year old that's away from home for the first time it presents an intimidating atmosphere and portrays a distance between the students and the professors. At Eastern, these issues don't exist. My classes are usually approximately 25 students and have never been above 40. The full-time faculty is always available to see and go over any questions about assignments academic opportunities. They have provided valuable insight into the academic and professional world and ensured that I have always understood subject matter, been able to excel in my classes, and opened doors to the career world. Through the full-time faculty and services at Eastern, I have been able to get two internships that have prepared me for the work world after I graduate.

Reorganization of the CSU system needs to be looked at critically and over a long period of time, not hurriedly where mistakes in the plan could be made. It would be a disservice to the students and the system to not take time in examining the implications of what could happen to the institutions and the students that attend them. In times of economic difficulty, sacrifices are required, but students that are aiming to further their education and get higher paying jobs shouldn't bear the cost that would occur from reorganization.