University of Connecticut

Written
Testimony

Submitted

By

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Co-Chairs, Ranking Members and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony today on H.B. 5464 under consideration by the Committee.

AN ACT CONCERNING THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE FOR CERTAIN STATE EMPLOYEES AND GRADUATE ASSISTANTS AT STATE UNIVERSITIES.

The University is concerned about this legislation in terms of its impact on managers as well as our graduate assistants.

The proposed legislation would use an arbitrary formula to determine how many managers the university could employ. The proposal does not effectively consider the size, scope and complexity of managing a workforce of approximately 4,500 regular employees, 700 part time employees, thousands of student workers and a student population of over 25,000 nor of managing the infrastructure and services required to run what is essentially a mid-size city. With seven collective bargaining agreements covering almost 91% of the workforce, the University believes it essential to provide appropriate and effective managerial oversight to ensure it meets its statutory obligations to our students and the state.

Establishment of managerial positions mitigates against conflicts of interest between the mission, goals, policies and regulations of the University and those of the collective bargaining agent. Managerial staff not only direct a range of academic, finance and administrative functions within the University, they participate in the formulation of University policy and serve a major role directing and overseeing the effectiveness and efficiency of the work performed to ensure

the Universities priorities are met. Ensuring an appropriate cadre of individuals whose principle obligation is to the University is essential to meeting the institution's obligations.

With respect to defining Graduate Assistants as employees, the University believes this legislative change fails to recognize the primary academic benefit Graduate Assistantships are intended to provide. The University's approach to recruiting and appointing academically talented graduate assistants has been highly supportive of their primary role as students and of the need to provide appropriate financial support to help these students access advanced educational opportunities.

At the University of Connecticut we enroll about 5,500 graduate students. From this number, about 2,200 serve as Graduate Assistants, either teaching or conducting research.

A graduate assistantship – either teaching or research - involves a 20 hour per week commitment for a "full-time" assistantship. A half-time assistantship involves about 10 hours per week. For an academic year (10 months), 20 hour per week assistantship the stipend ranges from $11,171 to $22,342. If equated to a 40 hour week, the range becomes $22,342 to $44,684. Those GAs with at least a half time assistantship also qualify for tuition remission and medical benefits.

The University has worked hard to provide competitive stipends and medical and dental insurance to our graduate assistants. The primary purpose of such assistantships is to offset the cost of attending graduate school while providing opportunities for practical experience in activities related to the student's academic program. While graduate assistants do provide service to the University, the greater value is to the student in terms of their academic experience.