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Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee's public hearing on S.B. No. 1011 - An Act Concerning a Reorganization of Connecticut's System of Public Higher Education. Please begin your speaking testimony in the following way:

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

If all the Governor's proposed changes for higher education are implemented, in many ways life will go on as before. Professors will teach, students will study. We might even all be grateful that we did not get hired by the State university system in Wisconsin.

But there is a serious principle at stake that, if allowed to triumph, will only harm the people of Connecticut over time. While even the most repugnant of criminals is entitled to the most vigorous possible defense, it increasingly appears that state workers—in particular those who work in higher education—are not being defended by anyone. As the advocates of higher education in Connecticut, we come here today to beseech to be our voice. While consensus requires compromise, we ask you to barter and not acquiesce. We ask you to be willing to meet in the middle, but no further than that toward the side of dismantling higher education.

As has been the case in Minnesota, consolidation will cost money, and not save it, once a new bureaucracy is developed, approved, and so forth. Time is the enemy of financial solvency. And then we will actually be worse off than before. But then, it would seem that the distinction between pragmatism and politics is getting especially blurred here. Data does not appear necessary. In the hour of economic challenge, higher education is the first casualty; this is simply what is expected to happen. Unlike the serial killer, state workers and college professors in particular are guilty until proven innocent. Or so says the media and the uninformed.

Let us briefly address these common buzzwords such as goals and outcomes. Have our local, state and federal governments kept their people financially solvent, which is one of the most basic requests made of any government? Does the Department of Corrections truly correct offenders, or does it often make them more offensive? After ten years of paying my taxes to capture Osama Ben Laden, the government continues to have no outcomes to show toward meeting its goal.

We ask you today for courage. We ask you for the integrity we know you possess. Higher education is the level that closes the achievement gap. To fund it less than K through 12 simply is counterproductive. Connecticut will become an even more glaring example of the achievement gap than it already is. We believe that in your hearts you know the right thing to do. As role models for the next generation, let us do it. Let us restore the truth into our state and national vocabulary.

Thank you.