



CONNECTICUT STATE
COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES
BOARD OF REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Testimony by Dr. Robert A. Kennedy
Interim President
Board of Regents for Higher Education
Before the Education Committee
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Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts about a critical issue across educational sectors. For the record, my name is Bob Kennedy and I am the Interim President of the Board of Regents for Higher Education, which governs the 17 Connecticut State Colleges and Universities in our state. I am offering testimony in support of Senate Bill 24, *An Act Concerning Educational Competitiveness*.

When I first became the Interim President of the Board of Regents, I embarked upon a 17-campus tour to each of our Connecticut State Colleges and Universities. On each campus, I heard from faculty and staff about the critical issue of students arriving at their colleges and universities unprepared to take on the rigors of freshman year. As a former college professor and administrator, I knew that to be true in my own experience, but in my new position, in particular, I had to take a step back and understand that nearly half of the teachers in our state classrooms come from our four state universities. To be clear, a great many of those teachers are passionate about their craft and invested in their students.

But we know we need to do more to prepare our students for a 21st century global economy. The proposals contained in this bill hold accountable both our teacher education training programs and the students who want to be a part of them. We want students who know how to learn themselves to help our youngest minds in our state's classrooms. Raising our admission standards from a "B Minus" to a "B Plus" just makes sense. We also need to consider ways in which we can make our teacher training programs more hands-on and classroom-based.

I have been impressed by the willingness of our sister state agencies to collaborate with one another, and I am pleased that the Education Preparation Advisory Council, which will help evaluate our teacher training programs, will fall under the jurisdiction of both the State Board of Education and the Board of Regents. It is difficult to separate from each other the issues of teacher preparation and student readiness, particularly when our schools train approximately 50% of the teachers in Connecticut classrooms. This partnership will help ensure that we are working across silos to assess our efficacy and success.

The word "accountability" can sometimes raise the ire of those who are being held to that standard. But it doesn't have to be that way. I believe this review process takes into account a number of metrics as well as qualitative feedback from the districts in which our teachers are serving. And why shouldn't we be continually trying to make our programs better suited to the teachers we graduate and the students they teach?

In closing, I believe this proposal holds a great deal of promise for our future teachers, and indeed, for their future students, as well. Thank you for your time.