

Friday, March 9, 2012

**SB: (Raised) Bill No. 286**

Greetings: Honorable Senators and Representatives.

My name is Fiona Williams, and I am a first year student from the University of Connecticut, Social Work Master's Program.

I am here today to testify for Bill No. 286, "AN ACT EXEMPTING INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION THAT OFFER FREE COURSES TO INMATES FROM STATE CONTRACTING REQUIREMENTS.

I am for this legislation and I would hope that you will support it.

The defining problem is institutions of higher education have to go through a lengthy state contracting process that requires state contractors to file workforce reports, file course work reports, and cannot campaign. Not to mention this may conflict with or cause confusion with existing accreditation requirements for universities and colleges.

Universities and colleges that choose to volunteer their time should remain as "volunteers" instead of as "state contractors," especially since institutions are not receiving state money and are providing a benefit to the state as a public service.

As a student studying social work, I understand the benefit of this free service to inmates—such as increasing self-confidence and helping inmates transition smoothly into society. Courses offered to inmates such as freshman seminar, job training, and resume building can significantly impact whether an inmate re-enters prison or becomes a model citizen.

I personally believe the state contracting requirements will discourage other universities and colleges from offering credit courses at no charge. In closing, I hope that you will support this bill by "*Cutting the RED TAPE*" and encourage more institutions and professors like Ms. Linda Meyer to donate their time to inmates for no-cost college credit courses.

Thank you for this opportunity to present.

I would be happy to answer any questions.