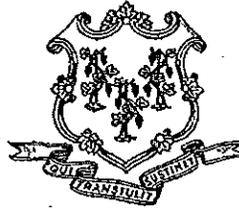


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March 1, 2012

Good Morning Senator Bye, Representative Willis and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. I am here to testify in support of SB146, AN ACT CONCERNING FOSTER CHILDREN IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

This bill, which is similar to legislation recently passed in California, would assist foster children who are, at the age of majority, in the custody of the Commissioner of Children and Families and placed in foster care.

It would offer two types of assistance to these children as they enter adulthood: first, it would give them priority in college class registration and second it would offer a preference in hiring for or placement in internships at state agencies.

Priority enrollment typically means that students are allowed to register for classes early. This would assist foster youth, who because they often lack the family support, housing and financial assistance enjoyed by students who grow up in intact families, are more likely to drop out if they can't get the classes they need. For foster youth and former foster youth, gaining access to the classes required to graduate will help ensure that this vulnerable student population receives the support needed not to merely enroll, but to attain a degree. All of society benefits when these children, who have faced certain hardships, are able to pursue higher education.

Similarly, the second section of this legislation would give preference to qualified applicants, who have been dependent children in foster care, in hiring for or placement in internships with state agencies. This provision will allow certain foster children to gain applied work experience which will assist them in successfully seeking employment. This policy would be similar to the preference given to veterans in certain employment situations.

These are small changes with no fiscal impact but they would assist young adults who face a challenging path to higher education. Thank you for considering this important legislation.