

UConn Student Matthew Vece Testimony in Opposition HB 5617  
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
March 14, 2013

Senator Bye, Representative Willis, Senator Boucher, and Representative LeGeyt and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition of HB 5617, An Act Concerning Student Membership on the Board of Trustees for the University of Connecticut.

My name is Matthew Vece and I am a junior political science major at UConn. I sit here today in opposition of this bill because I do not believe it will serve in the best interest of my university. If this bill were to pass as it is written today, it would effectively remove or discourage many of the most qualified students from running for Student Trustee. The language of this bill would completely eliminate seniors from running, and it will limit juniors to just a one year term. While researching this bill, I had the opportunity to speak with Michael Daniels; who was just elected as our undergraduate Student Trustee earlier this week. Mr. Daniels, a junior, told me, "I certainly do not think I would have been prepared to run last year." He is currently the External Affairs Chair of the Undergraduate Student Government and he cited this as an invaluable experience towards preparing for the Board.

Passing this bill will undoubtedly lead to negative consequences for student representation on the Board of Trustees. My peers and I want to elect the candidate that we feel will serve us best, like Mr. Daniels. In the event this bill gets through the legislature, Mr. Daniels would be limited to just a one year term on the board. This will inhibit his ability to form relationships with other board members, so our student representative may consequently have less influence on the Board of Trustees. This one year term may also discourage other qualified upperclassmen from running in an election. As a result, we may be forced to choose between younger candidates who are far less qualified.

I am testifying here today because I believe juniors, like Mr. Daniels, can effectively represent the undergraduate student body in their senior year and in their first year following graduation. In this first year after graduation, former students are still very much in touch with the issues facing the university. Their first experiences in "the real world" can also be an effective tool when evaluating what is in the best the interest of the undergraduate student body. On the other hand, students who are elected in their final semester before graduating may become removed from many important issues that UConn undergraduates are facing by the end of their term. For this reason, I believe this bill should be amended to prohibit only outgoing seniors from running for student trustee.

This bill was clearly drafted to protect the interests of me and my peers. But the language of this legislation, as it stands now, would actually serve the opposite purpose. I urge the committee to vote against this bill, or edit the language to allow well-qualified juniors like Michael Daniels to continue representing UConn's undergraduate student body. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to testify.