



**Testimony by Philip E. Austin, Ph.D.  
Interim President**

Board of Regents for Higher Education  
Connecticut State Colleges & Universities  
Before the Higher Education and  
Employment Advancement Committee  
March 19, 2013

Good afternoon, Senators Bye and Boucher, Representatives Willis and LeGeyst and members of the Committee. My name is Philip E. Austin and I am, as you know, the Interim President of the Board of Regents for Higher Education. The Board of Regents governs Connecticut's four state universities, 12 community colleges, and Charter Oak State College, the state's only public, fully-online institution. I am here to offer testimony on **House Bill 6648, *An Act Concerning the Board of Regents for Higher Education***, regarding the proposed change to the term of the President of the Board of Regents for Higher Education. As you know, I am the Interim President, so keeping the statute the way it reads currently, or changing it, has no impact on me personally. However, I believe very strongly that the statute should be changed in order to attract a top-notch candidate whose commitment and dedication to the job far exceeds the 18 month tenure they may realize if the statute is kept the way it is currently written.

As you know, the search for the next President of the Board of Regents for Higher Education is currently underway. The Regents' Search Committee (RSC), chaired by Lewis J. Robinson, is working to produce a position profile, solicit applications, review candidates, and, ultimately, recommend a final candidate to Governor Malloy for appointment. Throughout the search process, the Regents' Search Committee has been assisted by the Systemwide Advisory Committee (SAC), composed of faculty, staff and students from across our 17 campuses, as well as representation from the private sector. As I speak to you today, three finalists are in the state meeting with Regents, faculty, staff, presidents, students and other stakeholders, at a key juncture in their interview process. The Regents are working toward recommending candidates to the Governor during the month of April, and the successful candidate will begin his tenure sometime during the summer.

Understanding the impact that a large-scale reorganization can have on an organization, the Regents' Search Committee is seeking to identify dynamic, proactive, and energetic individuals who will be able to provide steady leadership and move the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities forward over a long period of time. The Board of Regents for Higher Education is supportive of a change in the statutory term of the president. Currently, the president's term is coterminous with that of the governor. The president of the Board of Regents should work closely with the governor and his or her commissioners, particularly on issues of workforce development, the alignment of our programmatic offerings to private sector needs, P-12 matters, and other critical issues that necessitate higher education and government partnerships.

However, the leader of the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities, much like the leader of the University of Connecticut, should have his or her term set by the recommending authority, in this case, the Board of Regents for Higher Education.

During this period of transition, a common refrain heard from students, faculty, and staff on our campuses, and from a few of you, is that our system would benefit greatly from having a strong, long-term leader at the helm of our colleges and universities – someone who will be here for the foreseeable future and who can advocate on behalf of our institutions. I couldn't agree more. I came to the University of Connecticut in 1996 because of the investment the state had just made in UConn, and you better believe I worked with every governor – regardless of their political party – to continue to devote additional investments to UConn throughout my tenure there. If the language concerning the term of the President of the Board of Regents is changed to make the appointment less political, I believe the long-term stability, strength and growth of the system will be greatly enhanced.