

February 23, 2015

Testimony of William Lugo, CSU-AAUP Council Representative and Faculty Advisory Committee Representative to the Board of Regents

Members of the Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to talk today. My name is William Lugo. I am chair of the Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work Department at Eastern Connecticut State University, a CSU-AAUP Council Representative, and I sit on the Faculty Advisory Committee to the Board of Regents.

I don't have a lot to say, nor will I say that the sky is falling. Because no matter what you decide, my institution, and the 16 others in it, will have to live with it. But what I am asking for is a moment of honesty. The question is not whether we will survive, but what will be left for Connecticut youth? That's the million dollar question that you will have to decide- and I do not envy you for being in that position.

Two years ago, I was at the capitol building protesting outside with my students. We were fighting to keep tuition down. I was one of only two professors who showed up that day and I took a lot of heat for that. I was told we needed to keep raising tuition to offset the decrease in support we were getting from the legislature. But even though it meant fewer resources, fewer faculty hires, I could not look my students in the eye and ask them to pay more. So I bit my tongue and I did not testify before the legislature then.

But now I am faced with an even more difficult decision. Looking at the plan before us, I fear soon I am going to have to look my students in the eye and tell them they are getting a quality education. I can do that now, but if the cuts before us are made permanent...I don't know. You cannot give someone a cardboard box and tell them they have a house. You cannot give students a computer and say "teach yourself for two years" and I'll give you a degree. I do not make these statements lightly. There are proposals out there like this- and I have seen them, and cuts such as these we will bring them to the forefront- permanently damaging our higher education system.

I have fought for Connecticut students in protecting their financial interests and never spoke out against cuts to the CSU system- because at the end of the day, I could always look my students in the eye. Our student's education doesn't need to be transformed. It needs to be maintained and protected. Help me do that so we all can look Connecticut youth in the eye and tell them they are still getting a quality higher education.

William Lugo, PhD