

**Written Testimony for the
Higher Education & Workforce Advancement Committee
From
Cynthia Gallatin, Associate VP & COO for Online Programs
Quinnipiac University
February 10, 2015**

I write to request that you support [H.B. No. 6715 \(RAISED\) HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT. 'AN ACT REQUIRING CONNECTICUT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT REGARDING DISTANCE LEARNING'](#) that will permit Connecticut higher education institutions to participate in SARA, a voluntary system of state reciprocity for distance education. The SARA initiative will provide a better process for all higher education institutions in the state of CT to comply with state regulations. The current process for state authorization is both costly and cumbersome for CT institutions.

As you know, Vermont and New Hampshire have already authorized SARA for their state's higher education institutions, and the other New England states are making substantial progress toward adoption. Your opposition to allowing Connecticut to participate in a voluntary national system of reciprocity—one that has been blessed by the National Commission on the Regulation of Postsecondary Education, the Council of State Governments, and even the U.S. Department of Education—would leave Connecticut higher education institutions at a major competitive disadvantage. With 19 states already approving participation in SARA, it would also leave Connecticut in the embarrassing position of appearing unwilling to place its distance learning products on the national stage.

SARA provides a better way forward for our students, our programs, and our institutions to operate across state borders. To quote from the letter that New York's institutions sent to their Office of Higher Education:

Participation in SARA is voluntary for states and institutions. The proposed SARA agreement makes a clear distinction between higher education institutions seeking to establish physical presence in a state, and those who wish only to provide distance education to residents of the state. The proposal provides for voluntary reciprocity between state regulators for distance education only, and does not affect state regulatory requirements for institutions that will have physical presence within a state. It affirms that the state that has authorized the higher education institution within its borders is responsible for approving the institution for quality delivery. SARA reciprocity would mean that as a member of the reciprocity consortium, we would agree to the same approvals from other states in the consortium. The proposal respects the rights of state regulators to approve these matters.

As a higher education administrator, I have been following the progress of SARA over the past several years and I believe that this process provides the best solution to help higher education institutions align with state regulations. By not joining SARA, Connecticut would be operating according to unique and local standards and this would make it very difficult for Connecticut higher education institutions to operate across state borders. By not joining SARA, Connecticut schools would be paying significantly more to operate across state lines as well as incurring excessive staff time to comply with state regulations. Most importantly, SARA will provide a cohesive, seamless process for compliance to assure students that they have selected a quality institution.

Thank you for your consideration for this very important legislation. I respectfully ask that you support this proposal and move this agenda through our General Assembly.

Cynthia Gallatin
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