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Public Hearing - February 24, 2015  
House Bill 6824

Members of the Appropriations Committee

***House Bill 6824 -- AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM  
ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND  
OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE***

Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight. My name is **Steven Cohen**, and **I am the President of the Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges (the 4Cs)**, a labor union representing full and part-time community college professors, librarians, counselors and non-managerial administrators.

Earlier today, the Board of Regents for Higher Education testified that the Governor's proposed budget may force them to raise tuition and/or reduce the number of employees at our institutions. The Governor's proposal appears to result in a relatively limited impact on the Community Colleges, and we thank him for his proposal during obviously difficult fiscal times. We cannot claim to understand the BOR's budget presentation in response to the Governor's proposal; perhaps you folks can. We only ask that students be protected from Draconian tuition hikes and that hundreds of us who provide direct service to students not be put in fear of losing our employment.

It is crucial that tuition remains at affordable levels. In 2010, the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce predicted that two-thirds of future jobs will require higher education and those with only a high school diploma will be relegated to low-wage positions in sales and office support, food and personal services, and manufacturing and construction (Help Wanted, <https://cew.georgetown.edu/report/help-wanted/>). If tuition continues to rise, Connecticut's low-income students will no longer be able to afford college, condemning them to a life of poverty.

If staff reductions are necessary, we urge the BOR not to cut from faculty and other staff positions that directly support students. At the Community Colleges, we are seeing evidence of increasing management hiring. The merger of the system offices was intended to produce significant savings. While the BOR shared in its testimony today that System Office positions have been reduced leading to \$7.9 million in savings, according to the Connecticut Mirror (CSCU after merger: Fewer faculty, higher central office costs, 2/3/15), "almost all of those savings are budgeted to be offset by increases in other expenditures" by the System Office. Many of these increases are due to the hiring of consultants, including \$1.8 million given to Boston Consulting Group to create "the idea" known as Transform CSCU 2020, to the ire of faculty, students, and staff system-wide. Further, many of our campuses have not seen the funding promised for our development education initiatives per PA 12-40. We urge the General Assembly to make certain that the consolidation produces the savings in the way that you had intended: by reducing top management, not faculty or staff who provide direct support to students.

We certainly understand the difficult situation facing us in Connecticut and the hard decisions you have to make. We thank you for your continued support of the Community Colleges. We urge you to consider the costs to the state if tuition skyrockets or if instructional or student support staff positions are cut.

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