



Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony - February 24, 2015

Good evening, Chairman Walker, Chairman Bye and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jody Barr. I am the president of SUOAF (State University Organization of Administrative Faculty) for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 32,000 public and private employees.

Our union urges you to please make sure that the Board of Regents' budget for the Connecticut State University System is properly funded. We request that funding for the **CSCUs** be set at the "current services" level. The proposed budget recommends a level that is \$3,861,540 short for FY'16 and \$3,861,540 for FY'17. Our members recognize that these are challenging economic times. Yet, these reductions in current services would seem to make matters worse, rather than better.

Those of us who work in the CSU system are proud of its accomplishments. We are particularly proud of the students that we assist everyday. The **CSCU** system provides a college education for many students who otherwise would not be able to afford college. Our students truly are the "sons and daughters" of the working class American families that our original land grant colleges were entrusted with educating. A recent Pew foundation study found that a college education is more valuable than ever, as those with a high school education fare ever worse economically. A 2012 U.S. Treasury study reported that the proportion of college costs funded by state and local governments has fallen since 1987 by about one third. This study found that in 2011 a worker with a bachelor's degree made about two thirds more than a worker with a high school degree. It also stated that the unemployment rate for someone with a bachelor's degree is half that of someone with just a high school degree. U.S. News and World Report reports that "Connecticut ranks 33rd among the nation's 50 states in support for higher education. . . Connecticut received an F in the "aid for students" category, D in "state appropriation average" and "tuition" categories, C- in "Higher Ed as a Priority," and the state's highest grade, C+, in "Burden on Families Average." Connecticut received an F in the "aid for students" category, D in "state appropriation average" and "tuition" categories, C- in "Higher Ed as a Priority," and the state's highest grade, C+, in "Burden on Families Average." This indicates that Connecticut is not overly-investing in higher education.

The strongest indicator of a nation's creation of wealth is still the percentage of its citizens with a bachelor's degree. Please restore the funding for the **CSCU** system. This funding will continue to pay huge dividends for our country.