



Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

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Testimony

Submitted By

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Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony today on Senate Bill 398, *An Act Assisting Students Accepted into the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program with the Cost of College* and Senate Bill 5420, *An Act Eliminating College Application Fees for Connecticut Residents*.

Senate Bill 398, An Act Assisting Students Accepted into the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program with the Cost of College.

The University of Connecticut supports providing financial assistance to students impacted by the proposed legislation. We recognize that current statute restricts our ability to provide financial assistance to students enrolled in the Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals Program, which may limit access to higher education in our state.

While we have not conducted a full financial analysis of the impact of offering financial assistance to a new population of students, we are aware that, if approved, the legislation will likely increase the financial demand for an already limited pool of existing funds available to students.

In addition to supporting a revision to statute which would allow our institution to provide financial assistance to students impacted by the proposed legislation, we are interested in collaborating with the General Assembly to address the financial commitment that Senate Bill 398 would require.

Senate Bill 5420, An Act Eliminating College Application Fees for Connecticut Residents

As the Committee deliberates on this legislation, I thought it would be helpful to provide background information regarding the University of Connecticut application fee.

Allow me to begin by providing a bit of context. A review of Fall 2014 application fees at 54 prominent public national universities revealed that all of these institutions charge an application fee. All of these institutions charged the same application fee rate for in-state and out-of-state students. Eight of these institutions had higher application fees than UConn, and we are among 10 universities, along with the University of Virginia, UCLA and Clemson and others that charge \$70.

UConn has made great strides in the past decade. It is not by accident that our incoming freshman profile is 120 points stronger on the SAT; 50% of enrollees are in the Top 10% of their high school class; and, they are more diverse than ever. An important factor in UConn's emergence as a top public university that attracts the best, brightest and most diverse applicants is a predictive process of enrollment management based on student application behavior. Eliminating the application fee will impede our ability to manage enrollment targets, effectively, in part, because of numerous soft applications from students who have no intention of enrolling. Operationally, the additional time it takes to process and review the resulting soft applications will require additional personnel and associated costs.

Eliminating the application fee for in-state students applying to the University would carry major implications. As a Common Application institution, UConn is contracted to pay a per application fee. The Common App, as it is often called, offers students a convenient way to apply to colleges and has contributed to attracting more students with a more competitive and diverse profile. Revenues from the application fee are used to cover costs of the contracted per application fee.

It also should be noted that there would be no substantial benefit to students with financial need because UConn liberally waives the application fee for students who demonstrate financial aid, and

for veterans. Criteria include, but are not limited to: Pell Grant Recipients; Veterans, active duty, guardsmen and reservists; College Board Access Program Fee Waivers; ACT/SAT Fee Waivers; Common Application Counselor Waivers; Students who qualify for the Free or Reduced Lunch Program; and, NACAC Fee Waivers. In Fall 2014, 16.5% of undergraduate applicants had application fee waivers approved.

Finally, with regard to budget implications: In FY 2014, \$2.7 million was collected in application fees. Of that total, \$1.9 million was collected from undergraduate applications. The portion collected from out-of-state students was 61%, or \$1.17 million. Thus, at the undergraduate level, the remaining \$730,000 collected in application fees from in-state students would have been lost if that fee had been eliminated. These revenue figures are net of other fees deducted up front by application vendors, such as the aforementioned contracted per application fee. Therefore, amounts would be due to the vendor, which would incur additional costs of approximately \$250,000 to UConn. That total budget impact with regard to undergraduate in-state applicants by eliminating the application fee for in-state applicants would be about \$1 million. But the other impacts I have cited today regarding managing our enrollments would have far more serious implications on student outcomes with far greater financial impact for UConn.

Again, thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony and for your continued support of the University of Connecticut.