

**Testimony of Patricia O'Neill, Associate Professor of Psychology, Western Connecticut State University
Member, Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) to the Board of Regents for Higher Education
WCSU-AAUP Chapter President
Re: HB 6812
March 12, 2015**

Testimony before the Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee

**RE: HB 6812 AN ACT CONCERNING FACULTY REPRESENTATION ON THE COMMITTEES and
SUBCOMMITTEES of the BOARD OF REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

March 12, 2015

Representative Willis, Senator Bartolomeo and Members of the Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee: Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I apologize that I cannot give this testimony in person as I am in the midst of advising students at Western Connecticut State University about registration for the Fall 2015 semester and their plans for their future after they successfully complete their educations. This is work that is important and one of my favorite parts of my job.

I am Patricia O'Neill, Associate Professor of Psychology at Western Connecticut State University, Western's representative to the Faculty Advisory Committee to the Board of Regents for Higher Education and WCSU-AAUP Chapter President.

I ask that you **support HB 6812, An Act Concerning Faculty Representation on the Committees and Subcommittees of the Board of Regents**. HB 6812 would strengthen faculty representation on the subcommittees of the Board and, as a result, add to the Board's understanding on matters of teaching, learning and the life of the campuses. This in turn would enable the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities to be a vibrant, exciting and national example for institutions of public higher education.

This committee should be commended for the foresight in creating a Student Advisory Committee to the Board of Regents in the initial legislation that created the Board. This committee deserves additional commendation for creating a Faculty Advisory Committee to the Board of Regents in subsequent legislation. The inclusion of administrative faculty on the FAC, the result of additional legislation, was another welcome improvement. The passage last year of a bill that allowed the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the FAC to serve as ex-officio, non-voting members of the Board was an important step as well. Thank you.

These incremental and thoughtful steps by this Committee have had an effect. The FAC made significant revisions to the Board's Transfer and Articulation policy (TAP) and was instrumental in establishing processes for faculty from across the system to come together to create curricula that will establish transparent pathways between the community colleges and the state universities. The FAC contributed to the refining of the mission and vision statement for the system and the mission statements for the community colleges, the state universities and Charter Oak. The FAC worked closely with the system's senior administration on the initial planning and committee design to meet the requirements of PA 12-40, the developmental education bill and continue to monitor the progress of the bill through the

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system. And during the last year, the FAC has represented the voices of faculty in helping to define the elements of a strategic plan under Transform 2020. Our goal is academic excellence that is affordable and accessible to the people of Connecticut.

The FAC provides a window for the BOR into the more than 5000 faculty members across the 17 institutions, and it brings a faculty voice to the Board on matters of systemic importance. This window is necessary and beneficial for the following reasons: While the BOR serves as the central policy body for 17 public higher education institutions, it is distant from student life and the vibrancy of our individual institutions. The BOR's position is further removed from the vibrant daily life of our individual institutions by a system office that also has little experience with the daily lives of the individual institutions.

Faculty representation on the Board subcommittees is essential to maintaining a connection between the governing body of the system, the academic mission of the system and the necessarily distinct missions of the individual institutions of the system. Faculty service on the subcommittees of the Board can only enhance the Board's decision-making capacity, improve its legitimacy and make our system of shared governance more responsive to the interests of all. Faculty service on the subcommittees may also set a national example for how our system of shared governance works to improve public higher education.

I also support the recommendation made by Vijay Nair, the President of CSU-AAUP, to enable the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the FAC to appoint FAC members to serve on each subcommittee of the Board. This will insure that faculty representatives from the state universities, the community colleges and Charter Oak State College have an opportunity to be heard on matters of systemic importance.

By passing HB 6812, this committee continues with its thoughtful and careful work that resulted in the Faculty Advisory Committee. Passage of HB 6812 will add to that accomplishment by strengthening the necessary collaboration between the Board of Regents and faculty of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities to ensure that the people of Connecticut have access to an excellent and affordable education.

Thank you for these opportunities: to serve on the FAC, and, to offer this testimony.