



Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

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Testimony

By

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**HB 6813 AN ACT REQUIRING TRANSPARENCY OF EXPENDITURES BY
THE HIGHER EDUCATION FOUNDATIONS**

**HB 5484 AN ACT REQUIRING AUDITS BY THE AUDITORS OF PUBLIC
ACCOUNTS OF FOUNDATIONS ESTABLISHED FOR PUBLIC
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**SB 230 AN ACT CONCERNING THE FUNDS AND RECORDS OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT FOUNDATION**

Good morning and thanks for giving me a few minutes to discuss something that I know we all care deeply about – the future of UConn.

I'm speaking to you today not only as a coach, but as a graduate of UConn and a donor myself to the UConn Foundation.

During our run to the Final Four last year, and ultimately the national championship, a news reporter told me that our team was being called the Cinderella of the NCAA tournament. I told him, "We aren't Cinderella, we're UConn."

For me, that means creating and living by a standard of excellence. It requires dedication, vision and a complete alignment of priorities and resources. We've certainly seen the results

for our basketball programs. Our student-athletes and fans are highly motivated and so are our donors – who contributed more than \$35 million for a new state-of-the-art basketball practice facility that is an investment in the men’s and women’s teams. It is also the first University building on campus ever funded completely by private philanthropy and will help us meet immediate and future challenges.

UConn is now able to provide its student-athletes with a world-class facility where they can train, practice and study. This investment will help UConn attract and support its next class of champions. Student recruits now visit campus and see proof that our donors’ commitment is as strong, if not stronger, than any program in the country – whether it be North Carolina, Kansas, Kentucky or even Duke.

The impact donors are having extends far beyond the basketball court. They provide millions of dollars in scholarships and financial support to students, fund incredible research and ensure that we have the best faculty in the country. They’re part of the UConn team, and donor contributions are incredibly important in keeping them motivated.

I’m not a policy expert but I do have experience with motivating people and engaging donors. So, let me suggest three things that are essential if we are to continue our fundraising success.

First, we can’t take success for granted. It’s something I’ve stressed with my team, and I say it now because we cannot assume previous fundraising success will automatically continue. I fear that’s exactly what happening now, as some members of the General Assembly assume that the UConn Foundation will be able to keep raising record amounts of private dollars even if the rules governing the Foundation and how donors are treated are changed.

Second, all UConn stakeholders need to be unified. Those of us who are responsible for UConn's success must understand how our actions impact the rest of the team. In this case, passing legislation that exposes our donors' personal financial information will make it more difficult to raise funds for important initiatives. Athletics is just one area that would suffer as a result.

Finally, one of my mottos to live by is - when you go through trying times you don't stop trying. We must all work together and harder to tell people about philanthropy's important role in higher education and why we cannot undermine our fundraising efforts. The General Assembly should not pass a law to solve a problem that doesn't exist. We can do better.

I love the University of Connecticut and am grateful for the success we've enjoyed. I know that we've accomplished it together, as a team. We need that teamwork to continue now in Storrs, Farmington and Hartford.

Thank you.