State of Connecticut
HOUSE REPUBLICAN OFFICE
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONN. 06106

Testimony in Support of Raised Bill Number 5071
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
February 18, 2016

Chairmen Bartolomeo and Willis, Ranking Members Witkos and Betts, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, the House Republican Caucus would like to thank the Committee for raising Bill Number 5071: An Act Requiring Connecticut to participate in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement Regarding Distance Learning Programs.

This bill is an important House Republican proposal, and if passed, will have the Connecticut Office of Higher Education enter into a multistate or regional reciprocity agreement for the purpose of enabling Connecticut institutions of higher education to participate in a nationwide state authorization reciprocity agreement.

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement is an agreement among member states, districts and territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. It is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by colleges based in other states. SARA is overseen by a National Council and administered by four regional education compacts. The members of SARA are states, not institutions or students. Therefore, a state "joins" or becomes a "member" of SARA while a college or university "operates under" or "participates in" SARA. States join SARA through their respective regional compact.

The main goal behind Raised Bill 5071 is to allow students to seamlessly transfer college credits from fellow SARA member states. The middle class is constantly being squeezed. Joining existing SARA states is a simple and easy way to show families of college students, as well as students who are looking to enrich their lives with a college degree, that Connecticut supports them.

Providing our state's college students and families with a more affordable way to finance a higher education has been a constant struggle in our state. It is for this reason that I urge the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement to pass Raised Bill Number 5071, and allow our state to enter into the SARA agreement.

Sincerely,

Lezlye Zupkus
State Representative – 89th District
Bethany • Cheshire • Prospect