

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



J. BRENDAN SHARKEY
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 24 AN ACT CONCERNING PROGRAM APPROVAL
FOR INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2016

Good afternoon Co-Chairwomen Representative Willis and Senator Bartolomeo, Ranking members Representative Betts, Senator Witkos and the other distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

I am pleased to offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 24, An Act Concerning Program Approval for Independent Institutions of Higher Education. SB 24 seeks to provide parity in the state's authority to approve academic programs of public and independent institutions of higher education and to allow them to develop academic programs that are responsive to the marketplace.

Despite the best efforts of this committee and the Governor to streamline the program approval process through Public Act 13-118, the regulations placed on our independent institutions of higher education remain some of the most burdensome in the nation. In fact, we are one of only seven states that require secondary levels of program review for our private institutions.

Current law requires the majority of private institutions of higher education in the state to submit new and revised academic programs to the Office of Higher Education for approval while not requiring the same for public institutions and four exempt private institutions of higher education. This is a result of Public Act 13-118, which enabled UConn and the Connecticut State University System to become exempt from the Office of Higher Education (OHE) approval process and now only need their programs approved by their respective boards.

The bill before the committee today builds off of the streamlined program approval process enacted during the 2013 legislative session. It provides an exemption to independent institutions of higher education regarding the requirement to submit new and revised academic programs to the OHE with two qualifications; 1) the independent institution of higher education must maintain eligibility to receive federal financial aid and 2) the institution must have been located in the state and accredited for the past 10 years.

Placing our independent institutions of higher education on par with the public institutions and the four exempt private universities in regards to program approval is a fairness issue and will allow them to be a responsive to employer needs while maintaining the integrity and value of Connecticut's higher education systems.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of SB-24 and I ask for your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Brendan Sharkey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

J. Brendan Sharkey
Speaker of the House