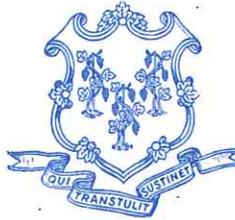


SENATOR MARTIN M. LOONEY
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Eleventh District
New Haven, Hamden & North Haven



State of Connecticut
SENATE

State Capitol
Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1591
132 Fort Hale Road
New Haven, Connecticut 06512
Home: 203-468-8829
Capitol: 860-240-8600
Toll-free: 1-800-842-1420
www.SenatorLooney.cga.ct.gov

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Good afternoon Sen. Bartolomeo, Rep. Willis and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. I am here to testify in support of SB 24, AN ACT CONCERNING PROGRAM APPROVAL FOR INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION. Current Connecticut law creates a significant impediment for private non-profit institutions of higher education program modification. These modifications are often designed to better meet the needs of students and employers.

As a result of Public Act 13-118, public colleges became exempt from OHE oversight for modification and now only need to go to their *own* boards for approval. No other level of review is required. That Act did attempt to streamline the process for the independent colleges, however, the new process is still quite burdensome and time consuming for these institutions (all new programs, program modifications, program accreditations, new institutions, and institutional accreditations must be approved by the Office of Higher Education). Connecticut College, Trinity College, Wesleyan University, and Yale University are already exempt from this process.

The legislation before you would, for certain independent private not for profit institutions, make the process the same as that for the public institutions (and the four already exempt privates). In order to qualify, the institution must meet these two standards:

- (1) the institution maintains eligibility to participate in financial aid programs governed by Title IV, Part B of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended from time to time, and
- (2) the institution has been located in the state and accredited as a degree-granting institution for ten years or more by a regional accrediting association recognized by the Secretary of the United States Department of Education and maintains such accreditation status.

I believe that institutions that meet these standards should be eligible for the program modification exemption. The bill would require exempt institutions to annually file with OHE a list and brief description of any new programs introduced and existing programs discontinued in the preceding academic year.

The department has previously claimed that it needed these seemingly burdensome reviews in order to appropriately regulate the for-profit colleges. It had claimed that it was required to regulate all colleges in the same manner without regard to their tax status. It does not appear that this is correct; a number of states have higher regulatory requirements for the for-profit college sector. I believe it is sensible to have greater regulation for the for-profit colleges than for the not for profit colleges, especially in regard to the not for profit colleges that have a lengthy history as part of the fabric of higher education in our state. At this time of focus on curtailing unjustified bureaucratic and duplicative regulation, now is the time to move forward on this measure as a commitment to responsiveness and efficiency. I would urge you to pass this legislation which would allow our state's longstanding independent colleges to better meet the needs of students and employers in our state.