

March 15, 2016

Dear Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,

My name is Christine Savino and I am here on behalf of UConn Storrs, regional campuses, and graduate schools to testify in favor of S.B. No. 343. Let me begin by thanking you for your time, the opportunity to speak with you today, as well as your continued support of this bill since 2014. I believe that what I have to offer to you today is crucial, and I would like to thank you in advance for allowing me the opportunity to voice it.

This Bill is necessary in increasing the transparency of the UConn Board of Trustees, especially in light of its breaking of Freedom of Information laws during the June 24th budget agreement. When millions of dollars in student tuition and taxpayer dollars is on the line, allowing for input from the public is essential.

For instance, when approving budgets the Connecticut Legislation allows for months of public collaboration with bodies who may be affected, including UConn. Similarly, the Board of Regents, the governing board for Connecticut's public college system, extensively meets with the public to create budgets and without executive sessions.

Likewise, for the past 40 years the number of UConn students has more than doubled, although their representation has not. The number of student acceptances and thus enrollments has increased for the Fall 2016 semester in order to raise revenue in light of UConn's deficit. Therefore, it is imperative that the student body is fairly represented through increased representation and that student Trustees are given added assistance in representing 40,000+ students.

I briefly spoke with Governor Malloy regarding this issue, and he informed me that he will, again, not approve of an increase in student representation this year. He provided that he does not "want it to become an advocacy group for students." I empathize with his perspective, although adding 2 student representatives would still provide students with less than 20% of the Board.

Thus, I would like to suggest for the for the revision of SB 343 to read as "The University of Connecticut, as the board of trustees of said university shall determine, elect two additional *alternate* trustees," as was first drafted in HB 5494 but removed in HB 6118. These alternate members would dedicate a year of their tenure to becoming more knowledgeable about the

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Board of Trustees while being mentored by the senior student Trustee. They would then spend the remaining year of their tenure as a voting member and would train the next junior trustee.

We are not advocating for equality on the Board of Trustees as we agree that majority membership of the Board should remain of professionals, but rather equity and fairness, as 2 students is simply unjust. Therefore, this is not only the right thing to do, but the smart thing to do. This plan is meeting the Governor more than halfway, and we wholeheartedly believe that it will facilitate comradeship of collective interests and will benefit the university as a whole.

Thank you for your time, and I will be happy to answer any questions that you have.