State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL

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THIRTY-SEVENTH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
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HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT
COMMITTEE

February 23, 2017 * 12:00pm * 1D

Testimony *In Support* of Proposed HB No. 5116 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM TO COLLECT DATA REGARDING IN-STATE STUDENTS THAT WILL ENABLE PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS REGARDING THEIR INTENDED CAREER PATHS.

Dear Chairman Bye, Chairman Linares, Chairman Haddad, Ranking Member Staneski, and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of my bill, HB 5116. This bill springs from a desire to allow Connecticut students and their parents to be able to find the most complete information when making decisions regarding choices of major in higher education and the institutions they wish to attend. The longer-term goal is to create a website to provide access to such information. It is modeled on a number of state programs and websites, which use publicly available higher education data to present descriptions of graduates' earnings, job opportunities across majors and comparisons of college costs. Colorado, Virginia, Minnesota, and Texas have created similar websites and programs, in conjunction with College Measures, a division of American Institutes for Research. These states all believe that data should be made useful and usable to improve educational choices and workforce development.

Nearly two-thirds of students who graduated from public and nonprofit colleges in Connecticut in 2015 had student loan debt averaging $34,773, the third highest level in the nation. (The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS).

Many students select majors with little idea of the salaries they will earn and how those salaries relate to student loan debt. The purpose of HB 5116 is to leverage existing programs like P20WIN to create an aggregated database that would compile data on college costs specific to each major, institution of higher learning, and job outcomes, including salary projections, for students that matriculate in and later work in Connecticut. This would include both two year and four-year institutions.

Some of the data is already available through P20 WIN (Preschool through Twenty and Workforce Information Network) (which) "securely links data between education and workforce agencies in the state for the purpose of conducting audits and evaluations of publicly funded education programs. Information available through P20 WIN, can facilitate the long term economic development of Connecticut through the improvement of education programs and workforce alignment" (http://www.ct.edu/initiatives/p20win).

Few people are aware of the existence of P20WIN and its potential. By building on this existing program, increasing its visibility and creating a user-friendly publicly available interface, Connecticut could do much to ensure informed career choices and better outcomes for its student population.

I respectfully urge your support for this proposed bill.

Sincerely,

Holly Cheeseman
State Representative, 37th District
East Lyme, Niantic, Salem