

February 21, 2017

Testimony in Opposition of SB 596 – An Act Concerning the Definition of
Managerial Employee

Senator Gomes, Senator Miner, Representative Porter, Senator McLachlan, Senator Osten, Representative Paolillo, Representative Bocchino, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

Good Afternoon,

My name is Oskar Harmon, Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Connecticut and Treasurer of the UConn Chapter of the American Association of University Professors.

I am here to testify in opposition of SB 596 – An Act Concerning the Definition of Managerial Employees.

The intent and purpose of this bill is misguided. This language has the potential to exclude university faculty from collective bargaining – a mechanism that has brought stability and prominence to the University of Connecticut.

In 1975, the Connecticut General Assembly passed a collective bargaining bill for public employees. In April 1976, the American Association of University Professors became the exclusive bargaining agent for university faculty in part to preserve the professional standards and distinctiveness of the university. The AAUP won the union election based upon the promise to augment and maintain the principles of academic freedom, tenure, and shared governance in academic decision-making. It is these ideals that the UConn-AAUP advocates for through collective bargaining. Since that time UConn has risen in national prominence to one of the top universities in the country. Collective bargaining has not hindered this ascension but has helped university attract and retain some of the best scholars and educators in the country. To remove collective bargaining from University relations is to diminish and lessen the voice of faculty in academic decisions, to jeopardize its national reputation, and chill efforts to retain the very best.

The fact is that faculty, although we have a voice in academic decision making because of collective bargaining, we are not managers charged with the day in day out operations of the university. As faculty we do not hire and fire administrators nor, athletic coaches. We do not determine the teaching schedules nor salaries of fellow faculty. We are not charged with financial management concerns such as tuition rates and fund raising. These are duties and responsibilities of administrators.

The National Labor Relations Board defines “supervisor” as “ any individual, in the interest of the employer, to hire, transfer, suspend, lay off, recall, promote, discharge, assign, reward, or discipline other employees, or responsibly direct them,

or to adjust their grievances, or effectively to recommend such action, if in connection with the foregoing exercise of such authority..."¹

Our activities do not fall within that definition. We are educators in the classroom working with students to improve their critical thinking skills and helping them achieve mastery of concepts and to deepen their knowledge about specific academic disciplines. We are researchers conducting experiments and analyzing original source documents. We are scholars expanding the boundaries of scientific knowledge in our academic discipline by presenting working papers at academic conferences and publishing in peer reviewed academic journals. Through our teaching, research and scholarship we seek to inspire generations of students to participate in professional careers, participate in our democracy, and to contributing to the growth of our economy.

Given this, as a faculty member with 35 years of service to this state and institution", I strongly oppose SB 596.

¹ <https://www.nlr.gov/resources/national-labor-relations-act>