

# Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5195

AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ON THE BOARD OF

**Title:** TRUSTEES FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT.

**Vote Date:** 3/6/2018

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 2/27/2018

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

The Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

To increase student involvement in the decision making process at the University.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

[University of Connecticut](#) submitted written testimony in opposition indicating that none of the 50 flagship universities have more than 2 voting student members, which reflects the significance of having experienced leadership on university governing boards. Last year as part of a compromise, the University and the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) agreed to permanently assign the undergraduate student trustee to the board's Committee on Financial Affairs and USG was allowed to name 2 additional undergraduate student members to the board's Committee on Student Life.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

[Christine Savino, Undergraduate Representative, Board of Trustees:](#)

Ms. Savino's testimony stated that a greater proportion of revenue is generated by students than the State and that in 2017 mandatory fees were 41.3% of the budget. Student trustees need to be in touch with the needs of their fellow students and having one student trustee per constituency limits the effectiveness of each role. She continued on that students' lives are directly impacted by decisions made by the Board on a daily basis. Ms. Savino indicated that there are over 32,000 students, and that she represents over 23,000 undergraduates, which may increase the likelihood of student trustees not effectively representing their constituents.

Ms. Savino shared that she has attended every board meeting in the past two years, and some prior to that and no issue was ever resolved in a public session. Speakers who came in frustrated many times left with the same frustration. This is where student trustees can be valuable acting as a connection between the student and the board.

Ms. Savino said that the University added two students to the Student Life Committee and assigned the Undergraduate Trustee to the Financial Affairs Committee. She pointed out that “any student trustee always had and currently has the right to be on the Financial Affairs Committee anyways. Likewise, all trustees, unless they come in late, are in attendance by approximately 9 am. Therefore, all (student) trustees are present for the fifteen-minute Financial Affairs Committee meeting anyways, since it occurs immediately before the Board meeting, in the same room, and at the same table. Throughout my term, all Financial Affairs agenda items are either anonymously approved of or a person/few people abstain. Thus, the latter portion of this compromise did not change much. . . . Although the Student Life Committee is beneficial to the Board, the addition of two students to it would not change much. Policies are debated and initiatives discussed moreover within administrative offices such as the Dean of Students Office, administrative advisory groups such as the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, and the Undergraduate Student Government.”

[John Board](#) submitted testimony in support of this bill.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

See Response from Administration/Agency.

**Reported by: Jeanie Phillips, Clerk**

**Date: March 15, 2018**