

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, March 15, 2018

11:00 AM in Room 1C of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 11:09 a.m. and immediately recessed by Chairman, Rep. Haddad G. 054.

Rep. Haddad G. 054 reconvened the meeting at 11:39 a.m.

The following committee members were present:

Senators:               Bye B. S05; Flexer M. S29; Linares A. S33; Somers H. S18

Representatives:   Ackert T. 008; Betts W. 078; Camillo F. 151; Duff W. 002; Elliott J. 088; Gentile L. 104; Haddad G. 054; LeGeyt T. 017; Mushinsky M. 085; Sanchez R. 025; Simmons C. 144; Soto C. 039; Stallworth C. 126; Staneski P. 119; Tweedie M. 013; Ziogas C. 079

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 asked for a Joint Favorable Substitute motion for [H.B. No. 5136](#) (RAISED) AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFFICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION. So moved by Sen. Bye, B. S05 and seconded by Sen. Linares, A. S33.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 stated that this legislation came from the Office of Higher Education (OHE). He explained that the OHE does not have authority over the Board of Trustees at the University of Connecticut or the intuitions under the Board of Regents. The OHE requested making the language more permissive. He continued that the Committee decided to change the responsibility of developing a state wide strategic plan, a state wide diversity plan to the University of Connecticut Board of Trustees and the Board of Regents in joint collaboration, and maintains the requirement that institutions have a plan that meet those goals.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 called for a roll call vote. The Clerk called the roll. Total number voting 20, voting yea 20, voting nay 0, abstain 0, absent and not voting 1. The motion passed.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 asked for a Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to the Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee motion for [Substitute for S.B. No. 51](#) (COMM) AN ACT

CONCERNING THE FUNDING AND EXPANSION OF CERTAIN MANUFACTURING PROGRAM PIPELINES. So moved by Sen. Bye, B. S05 and seconded by Rep. Gentile, L. 104.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 explained that the substitute language comes for the most part from [H.B. No. 5338](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE FUNDING AND EXPANSION OF CERTAIN CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS and it essentially says we are creating a small pilot for funding the advanced manufacturing certificate programs that are run through public higher education institutions in the Board of Regents. If the programs maintain an employment rate for their graduates of at least 75% we will allow those institutions to submit a grant application to the BOR for funding to expand those programs. Rep. Haddad, G. 54 went on to say that these programs are an important part of our manufacturing pipeline and that graduates have been able to get jobs paying \$60,000 or \$70,000 per year and that the State realizes a benefit from that, but the institutions that run the programs have not realized a benefit. This gives us a situation of having programs that are more expensive to run, than the institutions can collect in tuition, which chokes the expansion of these programs.

Sen. Bye, B. S05 commented that this bill is a new concept. We have heard there is a real shortage of workers to staff manufacturing jobs in the state. Sen. Bye, B. S05 expressed concern that manufacturers who cannot fill open jobs will not stay in the state. She continued that the committee is trying to take advantage of an asset the state invested heavily in, the 4 manufacturing and technology programs at our community colleges. At one program in particular they could take twice as many students, but they lose money on each student. Sen. Bye, B. S05 shared that in discussions it was brought up developing something similar to a Neighborhood Assistance Act tax credit for manufacturers to take advantage of tax credits and put money into a fund to turn out more high quality workers.

Rep. Staneski, P. 119 aligned her comments with Sen. Bye and stated that this is the kind of out of the box thinking we need to have.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 called for a roll call vote. The Clerk called the roll. Total number voting 20, voting yea 20, voting nay 0, abstain 0, absent and not voting 1. The motion passed.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 asked for a Joint Favorable Substitute motion for [H.B. No. 5031](#) (RAISED) AN ACT EQUALIZING ACCESS TO STUDENT-GENERATED FINANCIAL AID. So moved by Sen. Bye, B. S05 and seconded by Rep. Sanchez, R. 25.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 explained that this will open the institutional aid pool, which is a student generated account containing 15 % of the tuition paid by students at our public institutions of higher education, to students who are in a undocumented status.

Sen. Linares, A. S33 stated that clearly there needed to be a bi-partisan solution for this bill as it failed to pass for 5 years and that together the co-chairs and ranking member worked together to reach a consensus on this bill to create stipulations that can make it more palatable by defining who is eligible.

Rep. Duff, W. 2 said that he will be voting no, not because of who will benefit, but more importantly because of who is paying for this. He went on to say that this program is a flawed program, institution aid, and that the name of the bill says it all, especially the portion that says "student generated financial aid." Rep. Duff, W. 2 said that we are asking students to borrow money against their future so that somebody else, who doesn't have to pay it back, gets to go to school. He continued that he'd really like to see some day, this body and the whole entire General Assembly just stand up and do the right thing and take it upon itself to make a decision, does society support this program or are we going to keep on forcing the poorest of the poor to pay the bill. He went on to say his objection to this, what we are doing, we're expanding a very flawed program and that his problem with this bill is that we are forcing college students to go borrow money against their future and then take 12 – 15%, in some cases 30% of that to give it to somebody else who is not liable to pay that back. Rep. Duff, W. 2 said that he does not know of any bank that would lend a company any money if

they knew that a portion of that money was going to a different company that doesn't have to pay it back. He stated that he's having a hard time getting around that and how we can actually condone such behavior. He stated he would like to see the whole institutional aid program just dismantled and replaced with something that we as a society can take credit for.

Rep. Staneski, P. 119 said that with regard to her good colleague, Rep. Duff, W. 2, she said that when we talk about college affordability and we are asking students whether they pay through Pell Grant, or they pay by writing a check, or they put together different forms of payment together to go to school and they send that check, that the institutions take anywhere from 15% to 30% off of the top of that, and if there was some way that we could lower that for everyone. Rep. Staneski, P. 119 said that she is supporting this and said she worked with leadership on this and the constituent base who asked for this and that the conversations this year were about solutions. She went on to say that even though this is coming out of committee, it is still a very heavy lift.

Rep. Soto, C. 39 said that he was happy to see the committee raise the bill once again and that the conversation has moved forward. He said that this is the only policy he has found in the state where a citizen pays the state something and gets nothing in return.

Sen. Bye, B. S05 thanked the ranking member and other co-chairs saying they worked many hours trying to come up with a solution that would provide that fairness that Rep. Soto, C. 39 talked about and that she is happy to support this bill, which she thinks is about opportunity and fairness. She went on to say that these financial aid dollars are critical for recruitment offices to recruit and retain students.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 commented that the committee has heard this bill every year for the past 5 years and he is encouraged that this year we worked together to craft a piece of legislation that gives us our best chance at making real progress on this issue. He continued that he has always been struck by one thing when speaking with the advocates for this bill, particularly the Dreamers, and that is most of them do not remember anything other than living in this country and if they did not self identify as undocumented, we would never know that they are undocumented. Rep. Haddad, G. 54 continued that they live in communities across the state and they pay into the fund, but are denied access to the fund. He went on to say that they are an amazing group of students who deserve our support as they continue this quest to make a better life for themselves in the future, and he supports this legislation as a compromise, a bipartisan solution to this problem.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 called for a roll call vote. The Clerk called the roll. Total number voting 20, voting yea 17, voting nay 3, abstain 0, absent and not voting 1. The motion passed.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 asked for a Joint Favorable Substitute motion for [S.B. No. 4](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING HIGHER EDUCATION. So moved by Sen. Flexer, M. S29 and seconded by Rep. Gentile, L. 104.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 explained that this bill has the exact same language as the last bill. It allows the leadership in the Senate and the House to have options for how to move this legislation through to completion as quickly as possible.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 called for a roll call vote. The Clerk called the roll. Total number voting 20, voting yea 17, voting nay 3, abstain 0, absent and not voting 1. The motion passed.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 asked for a Joint Favorable Substitute motion for [S.B. No. 352](#) (RAISED) AN ACT EXTENDING THE MORATORIUM ON APPROVAL OF PROGRAMS OF INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION. So moved by Rep. Gentile, L. 104 and seconded by Rep. Simmons, C. 144.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 explained that this is a 2 year extension on the moratorium for program approval requirements for independent institutions. It is strengthened from the prior

moratorium by requiring a file and use system so that the Office of Higher Education (OHE) will receive the applications, which will be deemed approved upon filing and will enable the schools to use those programs right away with the information on file at OHE, additionally it asks OHE to come up with a series of performance based standards so that we can have options in front of us as a committee when the moratorium expires in 2 years and we are making decisions about what we should do moving forward.

Rep. Staneski, P. 119 said that one thing she likes about this is that it talks about the outcomes and is excited about the performance based standards task given to OHE.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 called for a roll call vote. The Clerk called the roll. Total number voting 20, voting yea 19, voting nay 0, abstain 0, absent and not voting 1. The motion passed.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 asked for a Joint Favorable Substitute motion for [H.B. No. 5373](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENTS IN CRISIS AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION. So moved by Sen. Flexer, M. S29 and seconded by Rep. Simmons, C. 144.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 explained that this legislation seeks to incentivize the creation of funds at our public institutions of higher education to establish an emergency grant program for students who are facing special financial hardships that may impede the completion of their degree. He went on to say that it will provide a small amount of matching grants to our institutions if they can raise private funds to establish the grant fund.

Sen. Linares, A. S33 stated that he supports the intent of the bill, however he will be voting no as it appears this is going to cost additional money and his caucus is concerned about the fiscal climate now and the block grants, even though they are capped at half a million dollars, we are in such a tight spot that that is a significant amount of money in today's current fiscal climate.

Rep. Staneski, P. 119 asked for clarification that the committee had this bill before them last year, but it did not have the matching grant piece. Rep. Haddad, G. 54 confirmed that there was a bill title very similar to this last year but it was written more as a mandate to establish certain policies. Rep. Staneski, P. 119 stated that while she is voting no today to flag this because of the dollar amount, she would like to continue to work with the committee on some alternatives to incentivize other schools to do this.

Rep. Betts, W. 78 asked if there was a reason a law had to be passed to do this, can't it be done administratively when the funds are available. Rep. Haddad, G. 54 replied that he knows there is a fund that is currently established at the University of Connecticut, but he does not know if there are similar funds at our other public institutions and that this offers an incentive to create those funds. Rep. Betts, W. 78 said he applauds the intent, but if he were president of a university or college he would be doing fund raising to accomplish this goal, he would view it as part of his responsibility. He went on to say that the same thing could be accomplished without this legislation, so he will be voting no.

Sen. Bye, B. S05 said that when speaking with students who are in college, it is so often these little things that bump them off the track and stop them from getting their degrees and according to our strategic plan for higher ed we need 3,000 more degreed students than we are on track to have by 2025.

Rep. Betts, W. 78 responded that we are certainly supportive of that but we also had some legislation a couple of years ago to help people get their degree by providing 100% state funding and his information is that that program did not live up to expectations. He continued that there is no guarantee that the degree is going to be achieved or all the funding is going to be used.

Sen. Bye, B. S05 responded to Rep. Betts, W. 78 that when the Board of Regents testified about "Go Back to Get Ahead" they said the program exceed their expectations for degrees granted but that we stopped funding it, so they could not accelerate the degrees.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 called for a roll call vote. The Clerk called the roll. Total number voting 20, voting yea 11, voting nay 9, abstain 0, absent and not voting 1. The motion passed.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 asked for a Joint Favorable Substitute motion for [S.B. No. 353](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF THE CONNECTICUT HOPE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM. So moved by Rep. Gentile, L. 104 and seconded by Rep. Sanchez, R. 25.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 explained that this came to the committee from Sen. Boucher, T. S26. He continued that it establishes a merit based scholarship for Connecticut residents going to college straight out of high school with a grade point average of 3.5 or better. It would cover tuition fees and books.

Sen. Linares, A. S33 said he appreciates the intent but this would create an additional significant cost to the state. Sen. Linares, A. S33 made a motion for a friendly amendment, which was seconded by Rep. Duff, W. 2 to change the word “shall” in line 15 to “may” which would allow the Office of Higher Education to administer this within their available appropriations when they have funds available.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 stated that he supports the underlying bill and the amendment. He called for a voice vote. The motion for the amendment passed.

Rep. Staneski, P. 119 said this is a good concept, but she will be voting no on this bill even with the amended language.

Rep. Betts, W. 78 said that he too will be voting no and that the difficulty he has is what we’ve done with other situations in terms of providing financial relief to whomever. He went on to say that if we’re going to create a program like this, we also have an obligation to sustain it and maintain it. Rep. Betts, W. 78 said we do a disservice by holding up hopes that lead people to think that we’re going to be able to do something when in fact it may be out of our hands or it may not be possible.

Rep. Staneski, P. 119 said that in other states where they have these Hope Scholarships they have done something where they have a dedicated funding source.

Sen. Bye, B. S05 pointed out that this is in line with many things the committee has discussed regarding meeting our workforce needs. She continued that it is also another approach toward free college for scholars. Sen. Bye, B. S05 reminded committee members that 23 states have proposals for free college because they understand the workforce shortage and that Sen. Boucher, T. S26’s bill deals with that trying to attract and keep students within Connecticut. She went on to say that the original language in this bill, if it just supported UConn students with a 3.5 or better would have had a fiscal note of around \$96 million per year. She continued that the amendment, changing “shall” to “may,” convinced her to support this bill.

Rep. Camillo, F. 151 echoed the words of Sen. Bye, B. S05 on this bill, he will vote for the bill because of the amendment changing “shall” to “may.”

Rep. Soto, C. 39 said that he has concerns with this bill from a different perspective. He said there are many scholarship opportunities available for high achieving students and that what he sees too often is middle of the road students who have so many challenges to find any type of scholarship money never get any and that the over achieving students get over-awarded for scholarships and that a lot of that money doesn’t even get used and that our middle of the road students need just as much support.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 called for a roll call vote. The Clerk called the roll. Total number voting 20, voting yea 17, voting nay 3, abstain 0, absent and not voting 1. The motion passed.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 asked for a Joint Favorable Substitute motion for [H.B. No. 5371](#) (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE FREE 2 START SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM AND THE FREE 2

FINISH SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM. So moved by Rep. Gentile, L. 104 and seconded by Sen. Bye, B. S05.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 explained that this substitute language is a little different from the bill that was heard in that it is now just Free 2 Start. This substitute language establishes a Free 2 Start Scholarship program for community college students who have an EFC of \$5,300 or less as determined by the federal FAFSA form. There is \$5 million appropriated to fund the program and it enables the Board of Regents to prioritize that money if it turns out that estimate is not enough to cover the full cost of the program. It also gives the responsibility to the Planning Commission for Higher Education to flesh out the Free 2 Finish program and to report that information back to the committee.

Sen. Linares, A. S33 expressed his concerns that with the current fiscal climate that this is very well intended but before we can spend more money he would like to see more concessions from government unions.

Rep. Staneski, P. 119 said that the cost is concerning to her in our fiscal climate today and that she wished they had made it Free 2 Finish because she was moved by the testimony of some young people who had only a few courses left and were not able finish, but she does like that this will have more young people fill out the federal FAFSA form because they will find it is more affordable than they thought it would be and she likes that the Planning Commission will look at the Free 2 Finish portion.

Rep. Ackert, T. 8 asked if the funding for our state institutions has been flat or have we been reducing it over the last few years. Rep. Haddad, G. 54 responded that he does not have the numbers in front of him, but that he thinks we have not been maintaining our funding levels for our institutions of higher education. Rep. Ackert, T. 8 said that he believed that to be true also and that he would rather see funding at the levels we used to fund them years ago, so he will vote no on this bill.

Sen. Bye, B. S05 said she would argue that Connecticut cannot afford not to make this investment, the state cannot afford not to meet the workforce demands as we are hearing that companies are hiring. She went on to say that the word "free" is actually important, and she knows there are members of this committee who were offended at the idea that anything is "free." But, what happens is when you say "free" students then complete the federal FAFSA form and then you bring in federal dollars to help support the cost at our community colleges. She continued that most of the students in the band we are talking about would be nearly fully Pell eligible so in fact the \$5 million appropriated would cover the difference between what Pell pays and what the student pays to make it "free" for them. Sen. Bye, B. S05 shared that the experts at NCSL say the word "free" is important because that is what gets parents to complete the federal FAFSA form. Sen. Bye said this is not a social program, it is a workforce program. She asked all committee members to read the [Strategic Plan for Higher Education](#) in Connecticut, which was put together by business organizations, legislators, business owners, people in high school education, our private colleges and our public colleges. She went on to say that the Planning Commission said that we need to be putting out 3,300 more degrees per year than we are putting out now. She asked what the committee is doing to address that, and acknowledged that the committee has talked about things, but if the committee keeps saying we cannot afford it, guess where those employers are going who need those 3,300 more graduates – they are going somewhere else where those workers are, so we cannot wait to get started, it is time to start with something. She shared that in proposing this compromise that she and Rep. Haddad were saying let's bite off something that is achievable, let's start with people who are starting, let's start with people who do not know they can afford to go to college and let's bring more federal dollars, probably 2 to 1, into the state. She pointed out that an educated citizenry helps communities, they are on our non-profit boards, they volunteer and they have a higher standard of living so they are spending money in our local businesses.

Rep. Soto, C. 39 said that we do need to move forward, but he does have a concern about the bill with programs like this that put resources in because low income students are Pell eligible there's nothing within it. He said he appreciates leadership looking at that aspect of it and how it could be expanded and that completing the federal FAFSA form is a compelling piece of that and he does support the bill, but would like to continue working with leadership to be sure that our low income students, who are already Pell eligible, do not lose out on a program like this.

Rep. Duff, W. 2 stated that he will be voting no because every year he sees his town's educational cost sharing dollars diminished and he cannot argue for something when the state can't even meet its obligations to get these kids out of Grammar school and now we're talking about free entry into community colleges. He said that if the state has the money he thinks they need to start focusing on the feeder schools that are feeding into the community colleges first and not put the cart before the horse.

Rep. Camillo, F. 151 shared that Sen. Bye, B. S05 almost convenience him to vote yes on this bill. He continued that in years past they put out a Live Here Learn Here bill that would give an incentive for students to stay here by having property taxes exempted for the first 10 years and put in a fund that would go towards a down payment on a house, which he knows would keep people here. He stated that he would like to see something more concrete, and then he would be a "yes" on this.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 explained that regarding out migration of students, in the college age bracket, Connecticut is the only state in New England that sees an out migration of that age bracket, which is reflective of a couple of different problems. He went on to say one is what Rep. Ackert, T. 8 mentioned, we are divesting of our responsibility to fund institutions of higher education, we have retreated from the historic levels of support of public institutions. Rep. Haddad, G. 54 continued that our support of private institutions, through the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship, is also lower. He shared that he and Sen. Bye wanted to start a conversation about how we can invest in higher education again, rather than continue on the path we were on last year. Rep. Haddad stated that higher education has a very important role to play in our economy and he feels we must do what we can to jump-start our economy or at least make sure the opportunities that are right in front of us are fully taken advantage of. He said that we know that companies involved with defense spending are about to go on hiring sprees, we know that their supply chains are also going to hire more to meet those requirements and we know that community colleges are going to be a central part of our ability to provide the worker force to those businesses who are looking for those employees. We also know that businesses are worried if they are going to be able to meet their employment needs with the current situation and we know that those businesses are looking to other states to fill that gap. He quoted one business owner that "Rhode Island is eating our lunch." Rep. Haddad stated that Connecticut is in competition with bordering states that offer free college and maybe better able to supply workers for the expansion at Electric Boat and all their supply chains and expressed concern that if Connecticut doesn't move and do something, we will miss out.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 called for a roll call vote. The Clerk called the roll. Total number voting 20, voting yea 11, voting nay 9, abstain 0, absent and not voting 1. The motion passed.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 asked for a Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to the Education Committee motion for [Substitute for H.B. No. 5372](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DYSLEXIA INSTRUCTION OFFERED IN TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS. So moved by Rep. Staneski, P. 119 and seconded by Sen. Linares, A. S33.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 explained that was offered by a bipartisan coalition of legislators and it makes changes to the teacher prep courses specifically around Dyslexia and other reading programs.

Rep. Staneski, P. 119 stated that the stake holders who attended the public hearing on this bill testified that there was a need for this legislation and that it will help our districts save money on outplacements that may have been misdiagnosed in the past.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 called for a roll call vote. The Clerk called the roll. Total number voting 20, voting yea 20, voting nay 0, abstain 0, absent and not voting 1. The motion passed.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 asked for a Joint Favorable Substitute motion for [S.B. No. 213](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS FOR APPRENTICESHIP AND WORK-BASED OPPORTUNITIES. So moved by Sen. Linares, A. S33 and seconded by Rep. Gentile, L. 104.

Sen. Linares, A. S33 stated that several other states have created public/private partnerships that have been funded entirely with private sector money and philanthropic institutions and that his aim is for this authority to not take taxpayer money but rather investments from the private sector. He went on to say that he sees this working with gubernatorial leadership and with the appointment of a chair and individuals from the government and the private sector working together to provide a central hub for workforce development ideas, planning and investments. He continued that this authority will also have bonding capacity.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54 called for a roll call vote. The Clerk called the roll. Total number voting 20, voting yea 20, voting nay 0, abstain 0, absent and not voting 1. The motion passed.

Rep. Haddad, G. 54, Sen. Bye, B. S05, Sen. Linares, A. S33 and Rep. Staneski, P. 119 thanked Jeanie Phillips, Clerk, Stephanie Goebel, Intern, Janelle Stevens, Office of Fiscal Analysis, Marybeth Stevens, Jessica Callahan and Alex Reger, Office of Legislative Research, Naurin Hashmi and Christopher Cordima, Legislative Commissioners Office and the Higher Ed policy staff for the 4 caucuses, Diana Palmer, Manny Merisotis, Chris Zavagnin and Marie Schweitzer.

A motion was duly made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

The following legislator(s) contacted the Clerk prior to the meeting regarding their absence.

Rep. Cheeseman, H. 37 is absent due to illness.

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Jeanie Phillips  
Committee Clerk