

Statement at the Higher Educ Cmte Hearing on January 30, 2018
Dr. Matt Ciscel, CCSU

Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Matt Ciscel. I am a professor of linguistics at Central Connecticut State University. As a linguist who specializes in the complexities of language use and in language education policies, I am disturbed by the disconnect between the title and the details of the BOR's "Students First" proposals. One implication of this title is that students have not BEEN the priority of the universities and colleges in the system in the past, which is patently false. It also strongly implies that the elements of the proposal are directly geared toward improving access and quality of education for the students. Instead, these policies follow principles of consolidation and austerity that have a very poor track record in other states and, crucially, provide no substantial relief to the problems of debt and lack of access facing our students.

Additionally, I would emphasize that I am quite familiar with how the so-called "Students First" proposals have been received among faculty and students at both the four-year and two-year institutions in the CSCU system. This comes from my experience and from that of my wife, who is an Associate Professor at Manchester Community College. Most of those who are paying attention have reacted with either outrage or resignation, but none that I have met have reacted with enthusiasm or optimism. President Ojakian and the BOR will tell you that due-diligence has been done in including key stakeholders, primarily students and faculty, in the process, but just like the title "Students First," there is much of show and little of substance in these claims. I encourage you, as elected representatives of the people of this state, to do your due-diligence in reviewing these proposals and to seek legislative and administrative solutions that will substantially put our state's students first, just as CSCU faculty do everyday.