

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-352

AN ACT EXTENDING THE MORATORIUM ON APPROVAL OF PROGRAMS OF

Title: INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Vote Date: 3/15/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/8/2018

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

To replace the two year moratorium set to expire in current law on Office of Higher Education approval of private colleges' and universities' new programs and program modifications with a new "automatic approval" mechanism for all new filings for the next two years.

Substitute language:

- Lines 12-15: replaces approval moratorium with "file and use" mechanism with automatic approval
- Lines 39-54: adds performance-based standards task for OHE

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Dr. Noah Dion, Acting Executive Director, Office of Higher Education](#): Dr. Dion stated that the Office of Higher Education currently spends time reviewing programs at no cost the institutions of higher education, usually much faster than private accreditation agencies, at no cost to the Connecticut taxpayer. Dr. Dion also stated the need for a new and streamlined process for institutions that demonstrate a commitment to quality programs for students, based on outcomes, such as enrollment, graduation, and employment data related to a particular program.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Dr. Rhona Free, President, University of Saint Joseph](#): President Free testified in support of this bill. She described two different scenarios regarding development of a program, the first being much slower due to the Office of Higher Education's review process taking significantly longer, the second being much faster as the Office of Higher Education's review process was not a part of the process. She argued that the moratorium would allow for a more nimble response to workforce needs and student interests.

[Dr. Stephen Healey, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Bridgeport](#): Dr. Stephen Healey testified in support of this bill. He said that in allowing this moratorium, the committee would "create parity for these institutions with public and exempt private institutions in Connecticut by recognizing their autonomy to approve new programs through comprehensive internal processes." He also argued that in removing the review by the Office of Higher Education, higher education institutions would be more easily able to institute new programs in high demand.

[Dr. Aric Krause, Dean for Academic and Administrative Affairs, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute](#): Dr. Krause testified in support of the moratorium. He specified that this was because of Rensselaer's unique circumstances of being accredited by Middle States Commission on Higher Education, as a complete institution and not by New England Association of Schools and Colleges, thus they are required to submit every curriculum change to the Office of Higher Education for approval. Dr. Krause says Rensselaer has received many requests for program changes by employers, which he claims would be easier without having to go through the Office of Higher Education approval process.

[Senator Martin Looney, President Pro Tempore, State of Connecticut Senate](#): Senator Looney testified in favor of the bill. He stated that Public Act 13-118 exempted public colleges from OHE oversight for modification and did attempt to streamline the process for the independent colleges, but this process is still quite a burden for them. He also listed the private institutions of higher education that are exempted from this process: Connecticut College, Trinity College, Wesleyan University, and Yale University.

[Dr. Daniel May, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of New Haven](#): Dr. May testified in support of this bill. He stated the importance of this bill to the University of New Haven is the ability to respond to the demands of employers to better prepare their students. He also cited the competitive nature of providing these programs; the public universities do not have to go through this approval process, thus they can more quickly put out new programs, whereas if the moratorium is allowed to sunset on July 1, 2018, the University of New Haven will not have had the same ability to quickly put out new programs to compete.

[Gary Minor, Senior Director of College Relations, Goodwin College](#): Mr. Minor testified in support of this bill. He used the success of Goodwin College's new program development process to illustrate his point that being exempt from OHE's oversight has allowed Goodwin College to more quickly develop new programs that meet employers' needs.

[Rupendra Paliwal, Provost, Sacred Heart University](#): Mr. Paliwal testified in favor of this bill. He asked the committee to weight which state regulations add value to the state, considering the state's tough economic times. He also discussed that many other states do not have this

same review process by the state and described the frustration on the university level in regard to this review process.

[H. Frederick Sweitzer, Provost, University of Hartford](#): Mr. Sweitzer described the internal review process for new programs by the University of Hartford as extremely rigorous and efficient. He also described the creation of a new Computer Science and Engineering program, which he says could have been approved faster with the moratorium. Mr. Sweitzer said that the region's college-bound students are constantly changing in terms of demographics and that flexibility is needed in the curriculum the University of Hartford is able to provide.

[Jennifer Widness, President, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges](#): Ms. Widness testified in support of this bill. Ms. Widness detailed the independent institutions of higher education that this moratorium would apply to. She stated that this is very important to these institutions as it would streamline the program approval process. She also describes this as a way to "level the playing field" for these institutions and that the reliance on the internal review process is not a problem as these internal review processes are extremely stringent and rigorous.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None

Reported by: Stephanie Goebel

Date: March 29, 2018