



## University of Bridgeport

Stephen Healey, Ph.D.  
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

To: Higher Education and Advancement Committee  
From: Stephen Healey, Ph.D. Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs,  
University of Bridgeport  
Re: S.B. No. 26 and S.B. No. 131, AN ACT MAKING PERMANENT THE  
MORATORIUM ON APPROVAL OF A CERTAIN NUMBER OF PROGRAMS AT  
INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
Date: February 14, 2019

In my capacity as vice president for academic affairs and provost at the University of Bridgeport, I submit the following testimony on behalf of the institution in support of S.B. No. 26 and S.B. No. 131, AN ACT MAKING PERMANENT THE MORATORIUM ON APPROVAL OF A CERTAIN NUMBER OF PROGRAMS AT INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

The University of Bridgeport (UB) supports S.B. No. 26 and S.B. No. 131, which will make the existing moratorium on program approval permanent by removing the current sunset date of July 1, 2020 for private, non-profit colleges that meet certain standards. The moratorium creates parity for these institutions with public and exempt private institutions in Connecticut by recognizing their autonomy to approve new programs through comprehensive internal processes.

I also submit this testimony in strong opposition to H.B. No. 7088, AN ACT CONCERNING PROGRAM APPROVAL AT INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION. This bill adds duplicative processes to our institution's rigorous and thorough program addition process. It further empowers Connecticut's Office of Higher Education to promulgate regulations and establish thresholds of rates used to determine exemption. The criteria for eligibility as required by the bill for exemption, such as graduation rates, employment outcomes, and student loan default rates, have no correlation with the academic program approval process.

Bills S.B. No. 26 and S.B. No. 131 eliminate the requirement for the state's Office of Higher Education review for up to 12 new programs. They allow for institutional flexibility and responsiveness to timely market demands, which benefit students and the state's diverse employers. Since the passing of S.B. No. 24, UB exercised its careful judgment, adding three new programs. UB has a significant internal review process and desires to maintain the ability to quickly meet workforce development needs. We will continue to demonstrate judicious planning and oversight of academic programming. The proposed legislation benefits our institution and our ability to adapt our curriculum as needed.

The University of Bridgeport employs a lengthy and substantive internal review process, making the state's Office of Higher Education program approval process unnecessary. The University's internal process consists of the submission of a thoroughly developed proposal including an independent environmental scan, budget and enrollment projections, accreditation, resources, and staffing implications, etc. that is routed through our campus-based governance process. In the end, the president and provost must fully endorse any program proposal prior to the final approval of the Board of Trustees.

Further, NECHE, the University's regional accreditor, already provides strong, independent oversight for the institutions under its purview. It is the appropriate entity to monitor the quality of programs at the University of Bridgeport, and we believe that the exemption from the state's Office of Higher Education's academic approval process should be extended to institutions in good standing with NECHE for ten years or more.

UB desires to be strategic and responsive to the changing needs of Connecticut's employers as well as responsive to student interests. Recent examples include the creation of a B.A. in Performing Arts and a B.S. in computer engineering technology. Articulation agreements with state and regional community colleges will streamline transfer admission to the programs at UB. The addition of another lengthy review by the state's Office of Higher Education would have only prolonged the start of these new programs.

In summary, the program approval exemption for private, non-profit colleges that has been in place since 2016 allows the University of Bridgeport to be responsive to student and market demands without compromising our curricular, pedagogical, or outcome-based standards. We strongly endorse and recommend that S.B. No. 26 and S.B. No. 131 become permanent for the benefit of private, non-profit colleges and universities in the state of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stephen Healey".

Stephen Healey, Ph.D.