Bill No.: HB-6890
AN ACT REQUIRING A STUDY OF PROPOSED FEDERAL CHANGES TO
TITLE IX OF THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF
Title: 1972.
Vote Date: 3/12/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 2/14/2019
File No.: 

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Higher Education and Employment Advancement

REASONS FOR BILL:
To study the impact made on Connecticut students from the proposed changes to Title IX. Title IX is a federal civil rights law passed in 1972 that protects students from discrimination in education programs. In 2018, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos proposed new campus sexual assault policies that would essentially weaken the survivor protections put into place through Title IX. This bill will establish a task force in order to ensure campus safety at institutions of higher education.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
None Expressed for House Bill No. 6890

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:
Multiple parties testified in support of HB 6890, and commend Connecticut for the good work that has been done thus far to protect victims of sexual assault. These parties ask that the task force would examine four important areas in the proposed changes to Title IX. We need to increase the number of employees that a student can disclose abuse to that would require the school to respond to the issue. We should address the requirement of cross-examination towards the student who is seeking help through Title IX, which would only further traumatize the victim. Connecticut should establish more of a support system in regards to the effects sexual assault can have on a victim’s mental well-being. Finally, the proposed changes to
Title IX allow schools to opt out of the act without any notice, and we should maintain current federal rules that require schools to notify the US Department of Education when choosing to opt out.

- **Liza Andrews, Director of Public Policy and Communications, Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence**
- **Madeline Granato, Policy Manager, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund**
- **Lucy Nolan, Director of Policy and Public Relations, Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence**
- **Jennifer Widness, President, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges**

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Stephen Mendelsohn**: Stephen Mendelsohn testified in opposition to HB 6890, stating that he believes that the proposed changes to Title IX would promote complete due process in a case of sexual assault and be a fair trial to both the accuser and the accused. Mr. Mendelsohn states that if the accused is not guilty of the charges held against them, “the criminal justice system is far better equipped to find out the facts and ensure that innocent people are not deprived of an education they have worked hard for and paid for, and that lying accusers are held accountable for damaging innocent lives and good names.”

**Margaret Valois, Civil Rights Director, Stop Abusive and Violent Environments**: Margaret Valois testified on behalf of Stop Abusive and Violent Environments (SAVE) against HB 6890. Ms. Valois states that this legislation is intentionally vague and undefined. “The language of this bill calls for an amendment of the general statutes to require that public and private institutions use ‘best practices and protections’ when dealing with campus sexual assault and violence. However, those best practices and protections are not laid out or specified.” She encourages legislators to consider her argument moving forward and trusts the proposed changes to Title IX.

**Yale University**: Yale University testifies with reluctance and hesitancy regarding HB 6890. “The university is concerned that further amendments to state law while federal standards are under review could create confusion on campuses and could impede efforts to implement thoughtful policies and develop key resources for our campus community.” Yale speaks to the hard work that is already being done within all institutions of higher education in Connecticut, and believes that we should withhold from taking steps towards new legislation on a state level until federal law is finalized.

**Reported by**: Beatrice O’Neil  
**Date**: 03/15/2019