Bill No.: SB-26
Title: AN ACT MAKING PERMANENT THE MORATORIUM ON THE APPROVAL OF PROGRAMS AT INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.
Vote Date: 3/14/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 2/14/2019
File No.: 

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Senator Martin M. Looney, 11th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:
To make permanence of current legislation which suspends the requirement of the state’s Office of Higher Education to review all proposed programs and program modification within private sectors of higher education, an extra layer of scrutiny that public institutions do not have to face. This will allow private institutions to offer their students the most relevant and sought-after programs in response to student and employer demand, giving them the competitive edge they need to keep up with public institutions.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
Timothy D. Larson, Executive Director, Office of Higher Education: Timothy Larson spoke on behalf of the Office of Higher Education (OHE) in opposition to SB 26. OHE is responsible for the oversight of private sectors of higher education, and must guarantee that all of private college programs “ensure the protection of students and that Connecticut standards are followed.” OHE recognizes the importance of private colleges having the ability to implement new programs in a timely fashion in order to evolve with the job market and the kinds of skilled workers that are needed. However, OHE believes that it is more important that they maintain their oversight of private institutions in order to ensure the best quality of education for Connecticut students.
NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Martin M. Looney, State Senator, President Pro Tempore, 11th District, Connecticut General Assembly: Senator Martin Looney testified in support of SB 26. He states that the approval process that independent colleges currently have to go through in order to implement new programs or program modifications is both burdensome and time consuming. “SB 26 is an expression of our continued focus on curtailing unjustified bureaucratic and duplicative regulation, and supports our commitment to responsiveness and efficiency.” Sen. Looney believes that this bill would permanently give private institutions the ability to better meet the needs of Connecticut students and the state’s job market.

Several speakers testified in support of SB 26. They argued that the state review of new program proposals in private colleges and universities is an unnecessary use of the state’s time and resources. Private institutions already have an extensive approval process in place for proposed programs, and the additional program review from the state does nothing but delay the implementation of quality programs that could be a significant benefit to Connecticut students. Public colleges are not required to have the state review all of their program proposals, and this bill would promote equality and a level playing field for all of Connecticut’s institutions of higher education, in order to compete with each other as well as other states. The program approval exemption for private colleges that has been in place since 2016 has allowed for the institutions to be more flexible and responsive to fast-paced and ever-changing student and market demands. It is argued that SB 26 will in no way put the quality of education at risk because of the individual institution’s thorough and detailed review process for proposed programs that is already put in place.

- Tony Hwang, State Senator, 28th District, Connecticut General Assembly
- Ann Clark, Executive Vice President and Provost, Goodwin College
- Stephen Healey, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Bridgeport
- John Hopkins, Chief Executive Officer, President, Post University
- Michelle M. Kalis, Provost, University of Saint Joseph
- Mark R. Nemec, President, Professor of Politics, Fairfield University
- Sean P. O’Connell, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Albertus Magnus College
- Rupendra Paliwal, Provost, Sacred Heart University
- Janet L. Steinmayer, President, Mitchell College
- H. Frederick Sweitzer, Provost, University of Hartford
- Jennifer Widness, President, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges

Eric Brown, Vice President of Manufacturing Policy, Connecticut Business and Industry Association: Eric Brown testified on behalf of both the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) and the Connecticut Manufacturers Collaborative (CMC) in support of SB 26, and stressed the importance of the bill with regards to the manufacturing and technology industry. The demand for a strong workforce in this industry is at an all-time high, causing the demand for the most effective and relevant skills programs. It is essential that private institutions of higher education have the ability to “quickly respond to the fast-evolving training needs” of the manufacturing industry. “Adopting the original moratorium has helped a portion of Connecticut’s educational ecosystem fill a hugely important workforce need,” and this legislation will make the moratorium permanent.
NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:
See RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/ AGENCY

Reported by: Beatrice O’Neil  Date: 03/21/2019