March 5, 2019

BB EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

CHAIRPERSON: Representative Ed Vargas

SENATORS: Davis, Godfrey, Perillo, Phipps, Verrengia, Yaccarino

REPRESENTATIVES: Bergstein, Duff, Formica, Hartley, Moore, Witkos

REP. VARGAS (73RD): I'm hereby calling the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee public hearing to order. Will our Clerk please read the safety procedures?

CLERK: In the interest of safety, I would ask you to note the location of an access to the exits in this hearing room. The two doors which you entered are the emergency exits and are marked with exit signs. In the event of an emergency, please walk quickly to the nearest exit. After exiting the room, go to your right and exit the building by the main entrance doors or follow the exit signs to one of the other exits. Please quickly exit the Capitol Building and follow any instructions from the Capital Police. Do not delay and do not return unless and until you are advised that it is safe to do so. In the event of a lockdown announcement, please remain in the hearing room and stay away from the exit doors and seek concealment behind desks and chairs until an all-clear announcement is heard.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Thank you, Madam Clerk. For the public hearing, we have four proposed resolutions before us. For people who haven’t been here before, we allow each one of the nominees to make an introductory statement after which Committee
members are free to ask questions. When we finish with all four nominees, we open up the Committee for any member of the public that wishes to speak and we enter into the record any written communication we may have received. As you notice, some of our Committee members are not here. We're all required to serve on multiple committees and have multiple responsibilities, but people will be coming in and out. Everyone will receive copies of the nominees' bios and background, and people will be coming in and out of the room. It doesn't mean they're not interested. They're very interested in what's going on, but everybody has split responsibilities. Here's Senator Moore joining us. I'm glad because one of them is a Senate Resolution. As a matter of fact, our first one is a Senator Resolution, Timothy Larson of East Hartford to be Executive Director of the Office of Higher Education. What we do is we ask the nominee to come forward and raise their right hand, and I'll ask Mr. Larson to come forward. Please raise your right hand. Do you promise to tell the truth and nothing but the truth?

TIMOTHY LARSON: I do.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): You may be seated and at this point of the agenda you're free to make your introductory statement.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Thank you very much. Oh, um, do I need to turn both of these on?

REP. VARGAS (73RD): You got it.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Okay. So good afternoon Senator Duff, Representative Vargas and members of the Committee. I am Timothy Larson from East Hartford.
I'm honored to be here today, being nominated by Governor Lamont to serve as Executive Director of the Office of Higher Education. I would first like to thank Governor Lamont for naming me to this position. I'm deeply appreciative to be sitting in front of this Committee. I have a strong background in state and municipal government as well as the private sector. Recently at Tweed New Haven Airport, I served as the Executive Director and just let me provide a brief history of myself. I'm a lifelong resident of the town of East Hartford. I served four terms as its mayor. I'm married to my wife, Nancy. I have two adult children. I also served three terms in the State House of Representatives here in the State of Connecticut, two terms in the State Senate.

I believe I'm qualified for the position of Executive Director of the Office of Higher Education as I have served as a senior level operations manager for 20 plus years of varied management experience. I'm highly organized, motivated, professional. I have abilities to lead organizations towards goal attainment by the use of effective, influencing and persuading skills. I've got great passion for the delivering of results in a timely and efficient manner. I'm confident that I can lead the Office of Higher Education in the direction that will prepare students for gainful employment in our State.

Our mission at the Office of Higher Education is to facilitate and create the bridge between classroom degree to a job and paycheck in the State of Connecticut. Our agency provides consumer protection for students. We do so through the licensure and accreditation of independent colleges.
and universities, oversight of Connecticut's 112 private occupational schools and branches, veterans' program approval, student complaint resolution as required by federal regulations. We also provide direct services to students by administering a variety of programs. These include the State's three college financial aid programs, which account for 90 percent of our budget, the majority being the Roberta Willis Scholarship with $34 million dollars appropriated to that program. Minority student college access and retention programs, national community service such as AmeriCorps Programs which promote citizenship and service through the State. The operation of Connecticut's Alternate Route to Certification is one of the oldest alternative route programs in the nation.

Across our 21-member agency, we look to work on behalf of students assuring them of access to high-quality post-secondary education. Without question, we have met many challenges before, as the growth for non-profit higher education and online institutions seeking entry into Connecticut, the duty to maintain adequate financial aid for our neediest students, attracting the brightest professionals entering into teaching, and assuring students of college readiness seeking to better themselves through education.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to lead the agency of talented professionals and work with you, Governor Lamont and others through the Higher Education Committee in addressing these challenges and making Connecticut's higher education system among the best in the nation. My thanks again to Governor Lamont for this high honor and for your
time today. With that, I'd be happy to respond to questions.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Well thank you for that introductory statement and it's always good to have a former colleague here with us. I just, for my own clarity, because I have never served on the Higher Ed Committee, how does your office, the Office Executive Director of Higher Education interact or overlap with the Commissioner of Higher Ed? Is there any relationship there?

TIMOTHY LARSON: To some degree, yes, although we do have some of our own autonomy. In fact, as we've all started to talk about the ability to share services and do those types of things, we just recently signed a memorandum for understanding for six months to hand over our HR functions to the Department of Education so in those respects, you know we work, interface with them in that regard.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): So do you help set policies for, for the Higher Education Systems in the state or are you an independent agency?

TIMOTHY LARSON: Representative, let me just sort of maybe frame it this way for you. So, you know, our charge through Governor Lamont is to get out into the corporate boardrooms and connect with the Department of Labor, DECD and make sure that when students are graduating from a college or university or post-secondary, that they are actually walking into an opportunity for employment so I have the oversight of a number of different disciplines. So for example, we have AmeriCorps which is a federally-funded programs that does you know a world of non-profit internships and focus on that particular program. I also have oversight of the
Alternate Route to Certification which is sort of an expedited opportunity to get teachers to the Connecticut classrooms. We're the state-approving agency for veterans.

We also have the post-secondary career schools which I'm sure you're familiar with. We have educational aid reporting which is for the most part the Roberta Willis Scholarship Program. We do a minority advancement. We do the licensing and accreditation for all of the for-profit and non-profit, non-public institutions. So it's my understanding, obviously the University of Connecticut is a standalone entity, the four State College and the University System are standalone, and then all of the State Community Colleges are standalone so I don't necessarily have purview over that, although kids would get Roberta Willis Scholarship money and go to Connecticut schools. That seems to be probably the best way to answer that. And then I have the responsibility for all of that integrated back office and administrative level of services for you know limited HR functions, information technology, and those types of, those types of programs.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): That's very interesting, it's becoming clearer now. So if you're going to pursue a higher education other than through UConn or through our State College System, through some other kind of program, those are the kinds of programs that would be under your purview.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Right and so I've been there for about six weeks, still trying to get my feet underneath me with regards to staffing the office. Today, we're physically relocating this office to another floor in the building so we're, we're, we've
got 750 boxes that we're packing up and we're moving upstairs, so I'm looking to fulfill some staffing levels right away and then try to get involved and understand and learn each and every one of these disciplines that I've just spoken to you about.

What really sort of concerns me is that, is that at one time, this agency had 80 people. It's now down to 20 and I really believe, and I don't know if this is the appropriate time, but you know for example, I'm going to be going to Appropriations on Thursday with a budget that I didn’t put together and with a few vacancies in positions that I would want to debate whether or not I should keep them.

When we talk about integrating services, one of the positions in my office, for example, is IT and although I would certainly be willing to sort of surrender that, I would like to know what the premise of the IT is because as I've come to sort of learn what's going on with each and every one of these is that they do have their own sort of intricacy. So the state-approving agency for veterans, if you will, is one person and you know that individual, Mike Crisculo, is in fact, he's the president of the national program so he gets some federal funding to operate that program. He's housed in my office. The AmeriCorps Program is a federal program. They're housed in my office so I, I carry some overhead charges on the personnel, but for the most part, those programs are federal programs.

My goal is to really focus into each and every one of those disciplines and find out where the strengths and weakness are and where we can grab those outcomes and focus those towards a combined
effort with inside this, this particular agency. You know when we talk about veterans, I think that you know, you know if you're E5 and up, coming up out of, out of the military you should, we're working on a concept where you should be able to get cross-trained or given college credits for example so making it very simple for a veteran to get out, get that college degree and get up and running. So we would interact, in fact, we've had this meeting already with United Technologies where I brought in my veterans' person, my AmeriCorps person and my licensing and administrative person and sat with Peter Holland, who's the governorate relations person for UTC and one of their personnel people, and we listen to them and we say, here's some of the talent team that we have. How do we integrate each and every one of these pieces with you to facilitate these job opportunities? And it's really fascinating. I think that when we talk about you know the merits of what we're doing in education in Connecticut, we have a phenomenal resource that I don't think we are really understanding or utilizing. I think that with the correct amount of support and data, that we can drive you know significant outcomes out which would be that in fact, placing kids in job opportunities, keeping them in Connecticut.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Well it seems like your portfolio is quite varied, different funding sources, different levels of government involved so it seems pretty challenging with a pretty mean and lean staff you have there of 20 individuals. Do you think you have enough there?

TIMOTHY LARSON: No, I don’t. You know, I, uh, I would just say for example, the Licensing and
Accrediting Division I have one person, so I have 112 colleges that this individual would have to you know process their program applications. It becomes tedious so I think that, you know I need an extra set of hands and I also need to be able to sort of develop a software program that can respond to everyone in the office not having these individual pocketed pieces. It is my understanding that we contract now, an outside contractor at $100 dollars an hour to do specific tasks, software pieces for various agencies so I've got to get my head around those charges and find out if there's a better opportunity for us.

The Roberta Willis Scholarship Program, for example, has two people on that. There's 20,000 applicants, there's $60 million dollars' worth of scholarships out there and we're running that off of a, you know a software program that's 15 years old so I've got concerns about that and I think we need a little bit more of a ro--, you know I'm confident that it's protected, but I think that we need something that's a little bit more robust and a little bit more easy to manipulate and manage.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): When you say you have 20 people, does that include clerical staff or do you have other support personnel that is, that are working with you?

TIMOTHY LARSON: There is no real clerical pool if you will. Like, for example, I'm in the process of hiring an executive assistant. Right now I don't have an executive assistant. The person whose job I just took was an acting director who left to go to another state agency. The executive assistant office manager that I had retired so I'm, you know
figuring this out on my feet, which I'm perfectly willing and able to do. For example, the AmeriCorps Program has four people in that, they sort of their program separately. The post-secondary unit has about, they have five people in there and they sort of monitor all of the certifications and programs inside those schools, so they run their own unit. The Veterans Program runs theirs. The Roberta Willis Program runs theirs. The Alternative to Certification Program has a person and a half that manages that particular operation so we're thin. I think we need a few more hands just to expedite and get some of this data and make it a little bit more available so I think that would be my one sort of, and you know I, truthfully I have not had the opportunity yet to sit down and, and sit with the AmeriCorps Program and learn precisely what they're up to.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Yeah, it sounds pretty scary to have such a thin operation.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Well it shouldn’t sound scary, I apologize, because these people are, you know, I've been around an awful lot and I've got full confidence in these people and they are, they are doing a tremendous job. I think that they can, they're all stretched I mean and they're doing you know, the guy in Veterans is doing the work of four people and he could do a better job if he had another set of hands with him. We could do a little bit more outreach, we could do a little bit more planning, we could grab a little bit more data. So I don’t want you to be, you know this place is, is running well. It could run much more efficiently I think with the correct data put and an extra set of
hands just to facilitate getting, getting results out. I'm probably not saying that right, but.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): You know although it, you know it may be running well, but you wonder if someone were out sick or if someone were to pass away or you know, if you like an operation like AmeriCorps run by one person, is there anybody that is, has expertise in that area? It seems like, like, yes it seems like you do need a little bit of Human Resources in that office.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Well we, we do have Human Resource share responsibilities with Higher Ed, but you're right. So we have all of the mechanics of the operation figured out. If somebody's out sick, there's somebody covering the phone. There is clearly, you know the, the woman that does the finance for the, for all of these agencies is you know there. We have one IT person who does the, you know the rudimentary hooking up software, addressing you know some of those concerns, but yeah.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Well I'm glad you're at the helm because --

TIMOTHY LARSON: Well I'm excited. I think it's a great opportunity for the state. I think it, I think someone with you know my background, I did this at an airport so I'm overseeing what I believe are, are six or seven different units and I think that with my experience in the Senate, in trying to get to an outcome. I think that, that you know, I don't think we do a really good job of telling people how great Connecticut really is and I really think that we have a body of students and we have a whole host of non-profit education facilities that are really robust, they're really trying to do a
great job, and we're just there to sort of facilitate and make sure that, that things are running at a, at a premium.

REP. VARGAS (73RD):  Well I really appreciate your educating us on the responsibilities and the role of the, of the Executive Director of the Office of Higher Education because you know, like I said, I really wasn’t clear on that. At this moment, I'll open it up to questions or comments from Committee members. Yes, our Ranking Member, House Ranking Member, Representative Perillo?

REP. PERILLO (113TH):  Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning and congratulations.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Thank you, Representative.

REP. PERILLO (113TH):  So I am very impressed with your background of executive work, obviously your work at the airport and your work as mayor, but I have to say, I don’t see any experience in higher education at all. Could you outline for us how you're going to bridge that perhaps knowledge gap?

TIMOTHY LARSON:  Well I, in my one month there, and what I really need to do, frankly, I've seen and met with individuals who are currently in their roles and I've, and I've quizzed them, picked up a lot of different information and tried to use some of my business acumen if you will to help guide some of the, the decision making. I make no mistake that I don’t have a thick background in education, but I do know how to process and I do know how to sort of understand where these, these items are going. You know when I was mayor of the town of East Hartford, I had full control of, of a police department, but I wasn’t a sworn police officer and I wouldn’t know
the first thing about how you arrest somebody, and I just, maybe this is just sort of a quick, sort of you know story.

So the very first piece of legislation and we have responded to 12 pieces of legislation and have testified and what I have done is I've focused the appropriate person in each of these channels to provide me with a testimony, quiz them, and then come before you. So the very first piece of legislation that we have is an item that was brought up by both Senator Fasano and Senator Looney about a moratorium on whether or not our agency would have the ability to review programs. It was sort of an expedited way to get those programs through so we are working with those members of that Committee.

So I simply harken back to when I was the mayor of the town of East Hartford and Pratt & Whitney was building a rather large building, Senator Formica, you can probably relate to this. I got two inspectors. So if I send all of my inspection team over to Pratt & Whitney, no one else in the town gets service. So I make a deal with Pratt & Whitney that they're going to hire their own inspector. We're going to, we are, my inspectors are going to inspect the inspectors' documents and work and they are going to routinely come by and finish that work and so if something's wrong, we're certainly not going to shut the job down, but we're going to proceed. So then I went to Shawn Seepersad, who is the Licensing and Accrediting guy and I said, let's look at this proposal in this fashion. Let's figure out what the State University System is currently doing. Let's figure out what we're doing for distance learning. Let's figure out what we're currently doing and let's provide an option, let's
provide an option where these post, where these non-profits could in fact hire or assemble a third party to review their information, we would sort of bonify that third party group and then you review the third party group and we will then you know plus or minus off of that.

So that's a long way around your question, but that's sort of the metric and the methodology that I plan on using. Again, so we have this AmeriCorps program and I don't know if you've heard about this group called Girls Who Code. There's a huge effort in the United States to get women into coding right and so the United Technologies is one of the largest, of course. They're also our largest employer in the State of Connecticut. We want to try to introduce a program with AmeriCorps, with Girls Who Code and start a job funnel if you will towards getting people into coding, particularly at United Technologies because they have such a wide platform for that.

So I'm not, I'm not intimidated by my lack of information. I'm going to rely on professionals, I'm going to look for guidance, I'm continually going to be with my eyes open looking for opportunities that we can continue to sort of further the cause. So that's just how I operate and in each and every one of those disciplines, I mean I want to be able to initiate where they drop off. I want to be able to put programs together where they need someone to assemble or bring people into a room.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): I appreciate that. It's always important to know what you don't know and you know the willingness to work with others and fill
those gaps is going to be very, very important. I appreciate the answer and the question had to be asked, but I really do appreciate the answer and just one final comment. We heard from the Governor's nominee to be the Commissioner of Economic Development just last week and I would just urge you and your department to reach out to DECD because if we're going to do this when it comes to building an economy and restoring an economy here in Connecticut, education and economic development go hand in hand. I know you know that, but I just, I just wanted to say it.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Well, I appreciate that and that certainly is in the plan. Honestly, not only the DECD but the Department of Labor as well because you know we get these statistics of students finishing college, but we want to, you know what's the next step. You know, I, I am not alone in this. I've had a son boomerang back and come back to my home and look for a job in Connecticut. He does have a job. He works for the University of Connecticut which is wonderful, but you know you have a high talent pool here in the State of Connecticut and there are opportunities out there and we want to continue to raise that level of awareness that there are opportunities out there and from all I'm hearing, we've got to start back in the 8th and 9th grades. We've got to engage at that particular point and use all of our resources to, to you know keep that, that momentum going towards you know employment and you know good wages and that type of thing.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Best of luck, by the way.
TIMOTHY LARSON: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Thank you, Representative Perillo. Senator Formica?

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning. Good morning, sir, Commissioner, nice to see you.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Good morning, Senator, how are you?

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): I'm great, thank you. I agree, you know being a mayor is good, is good ground work for you know most any job because you're thrown into a dozen different things at a time and you try to work your way up and learn you know the fastest way to be the most inclusive and the most efficient so I'm sure that's a good background for you. I have an interest in, and I'm working on a bill, 356, this year which is talking about apprenticeship programs and when you and I spoke about you know your pending move you know you told me that part of that conversation was going to be that bridge between higher education and working. You mentioned AmeriCorps, you didn't say apprenticeship, I believe you said internship so do you feel that there would be room for apprenticeships and you know particularly the bill that I'm looking for is trying to replicate or study the model in Europe, Switzerland and Germany have some and then there's some states locally, North Carolina and Virginia that are very successful with these things, because we do have to try to keep young people here and move them to the next level of employment. Have you been in long enough to think about that? Is that part of the direction you think you're going forward?
TIMOTHY LARSON: I do and I, and I appreciate that. I've actually reached out to Global Affairs at the University of Connecticut. They've actually invited us to join them or try to put together some sort of a model to go over to Germany to start taking a look at what I think you're talking about. Back that up, one of my first calls to one of our major corporations was Lockheed, you know they've picked up Sikorsky and talking to someone in their personnel office, we said where are you getting your employees and where are you getting them from? And so they look to colleges with vocational opportunities or you know spending a year in actual service in a program so I believe that those apprenticeship programs, and then, and I think that you know, and I would say this respectively, that military service is frankly an apprenticeship which I think we have not tapped.

When we look at currently what we've got going on here in the State of Connecticut where we could be looking at a vacuum of State Police Force that I think could be buttressed right away, but to your point, yeah, I believe that there is an important piece of that and I would like to continue that dialogue, meet with you and then figure out how we can sister up or marry these programs together so that we can, we can really continue that. I think that those apprenticeships are important and I haven't been there long enough to figure out that postsecondary, you know those sort of certificates programs if you will, but I think that there's a wedge there. You know a lot of people may not be necessarily looking for a four-year degree, but you know get into some type of a program where they can you know get out and mix it up.
So we want to get to thank you our technologies, we want to be at AB, we want to be at, but we also want to be at the mid-ranges and we want to be at places where we can be most effective so the idea, in my mind, is to sort of put together a sort of a, you know an index of where our strengths are and then where we need to backfill from an educational perspective and from a jobs perspective.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you, and I know the good Chairman talked about, I have one more? Okay. The good Chairman talked about connection with the other educational community, the Board of Regents and things and I didn’t get quite your answer. Are you, do you oversee the Board of Regents? Are you on the Board of Regents? Is it a separate but a working relationship kind of hand in hand or is it not?

TIMOTHY LARSON: The Board of Regents has purview over the state institution side, not our 112th. We're separate from that. At one time, there was a Board of Directors that handled that and then these agencies were going to merge and then the Board of Regents took over the State four colleges and community college operation and they run that program separately. There is some you know cross pollination of ideas. You know we had a big announcement with the Lieutenant Governor on a program at Goodwin College which falls under you know the Office of Higher Education and Mark Ojakian about STEM and advanced manufacturing programs and trying to sort of mesh those together. So they're, we're separate but in some areas the commonalities are you know, you know sort of the outcomes of what we're trying to get to.
SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Okay. Thank you. Well thank you very much. Congratulations on your appointment. You know we miss you in the Senate, but wish you, wish you luck as this process goes forward.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Thank you. I do miss my opportunity in the Senate. I will fully admit that.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Thank you, Senator Formica. Yes, Senator Moore, you have the floor.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Thank you. Good morning.

TIMOTHY LARSON: How are you?

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): I'm good. I miss you.

TIMOTHY LARSON: I miss you too.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): You've been a great colleague, sitting across from you and I've learned a lot from you being in the Senate. I appreciate everything you contributed there. I wanted to hear about your goals and you did talk about it somewhat and I understand there's a lot of challenges ahead of you, but I looked at your background. I read thoroughly through your resume. You bring a lot to the table in the way of being a manager for insurance, I mean there's a lot of components of your experience that I think will work well for you and I just was wondering, in the long term, what would you like to see in four years? What would you like to see that you have accomplished?

TIMOTHY LARSON: Well you know I've got a couple of you know basic you know short-term goals, right, so
literally, we're in the middle of a physical plant move you know so getting that established. So by next week we'll have you know unboxed, moved into the seventh floor, 450. My next, you know within two months, I'm hoping to establish some framework for each and every one of these disciplines so they have a clear understanding of what their roles are, what their capabilities are and how I can best stand behind these people and help them sort of achieve their goals. I think that there is a large opportunity for this division combining with a lot of the resources that are already included in here to provide good outcomes. And what are good outcomes, right?

So you know the fact that you can go online and you can apply to a college here in the State of Connecticut at whatever level and whatever discipline and that we have provided a structure that's affordable, safe and that ultimately, part of that college application is part of the next step which is the, which is employment so providing a clear path, a safe path, affordable path to employment and how do you do that and I think of my, one of the things that I do bring to the table is I like to initiate conversation because you know, kids graduate and then they're looking for opportunities and companies are looking to hire. You know I have these conversations all the time. You have these, you know and we want to have sort of an opportunity or a focal point or an understanding of outcomes for the state and I think we need to do a much better job of celebrating not only the diversity we have, but the talent we have and I think that, you know I look at like the Connecticut lottery. They spend you know $14 million dollars on getting you to buy
lottery tickets. I wish I could spend $15 million dollars on showing you how great the talent pool is here in the State of Connecticut, where they are actually -- but you know it's making those connections. It's initiating those types of dialogues. That's what I want to do and I think the rest of it will fall into play.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): So and I also heard you talking about working with Girls Who Code. I'm familiar with the AmeriCorps Program, but also back in Bridgeport, I helped start a non-profit to do STEM with young girls to get involved in math and sciences and coding. You're also going to be on a council for women and girls. I've also been appointed to that, to that council. I hope to work with you on that and do more work for women and girls in the way of math and moving them forward in different fields that they're not in right now. It seems like you have a really challenging job before you, but from everything I know and how you're so methodical in how you think things out and how you present information and say look, this is what you need to do. I think you'll be fine and I'm looking forward to working with you and I congratulate you.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Well, thank you and if I could just ask that, so we have a bucket of money for minority advancement and I need your help in figuring out how we allocate those resources so that they're specifically getting targeted, getting kids into teaching jobs. I think that there can be a progression between you know these non-profits that we're looking at, that get us to a job area, bringing in volunteers that ultimately, maybe some of those volunteers become those teachers, and then using some of those dollars that we have there as an
opportunity to help fund and use those, use those same resources that we have just in a, a little bit of a different direction and you know when I have the opportunity to you know hire an executive assistant, that, that individual's going to be shared across the whole spectrum of the agency. That individual is also going to be doing legislative bill tracking and coming over here so I plan on stretching everybody a little bit further, but I don't know that I can offer that just yet because I haven’t had the opportunity to meet with them, but they're, they're solid, solid people and I think we're very fortunate to have this group of people that show up every day over there to really do, they do wonderful, wonderful work.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Could I just say one more thing? So on the Two-Gen initiative that addresses poverty amount low-income families, we're working with all of the commissioners and all the different departments to make sure we're bridging information. So I know you talked a little bit about ET and the lack of communication and our systems are very slow and they don’t connect. We are working on that and I believe Governor Lamont has actually appointed somebody to look at bringing those systems together so we're not sending people in the wrong direction or not connecting information so help is on the way there also.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Thanks. I met with the Commissioner of DAS specifically about this topic and he, like I, is still trying to get his feet underneath him and once we do in a relatively short period of time, we're not wasting any time. Thank you.
REP. VARGAS (73RD): Thank you, Senator Moore. Any other members of the Committee? I see my, oh Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Good morning, Senator. How are you?

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): I'm doing very well, thank you and congratulations on your appointment.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Thank you very much.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Just a couple questions I had. It's been a while since I served on Higher Education, but you said there was cross pollination between the agencies and I recall that I thought we did some things a few years ago that had to do with private schools and making sure that there was a sign in case they closed, that the students were reimbursed. And then there was a push for, I believe doesn’t your agency, Office of Higher Education oversee all the trade schools?

TIMOTHY LARSON: Yes.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): And I was just curious since we've been talking a lot in this building about advanced manufacturing, not only through our community colleges, but trying to push more students to the trade programs through the vocational schools, what you're seeing out there as far as trends?

TIMOTHY LARSON: Well I haven’t been out there long enough to see a trend so I'm trying to digest that. I know that in fact you know when we had this rollout with the State University System, Mark
Ojakian's group and Goodwin College, I heard continually that the STEM Program and this advanced manufacturing is where you know we ultimately need to be and I think that that clearly is a very strong focus and I'm trying to not only evaluate all of our strengths and where exactly you know -- you go online or you're a business owner and you want to know well where I am getting these -- where is the talent pool for my business? Right, I own a machine shop in Manchester, Connecticut, I'm looking to hire seven guys. Where I am going to find these guys and I think that we need to create that. That may already be out there so I'm still sort of learning that and part of what I would like to do right away is to try to get a firm understanding of where we are with all of those types of programs so that at some point, it is point and click and at some point, I have been out to that machine shop and talked to those people and I can say, here are four colleges that have you know an engineering program that I think fits your particular needs and you have to go to these. I think that there are opportunities for us.

In the airline industry where I've left, they have two annual sort of speed dating opportunities. They're called jump start network so you would you know get to a large banquet facility and you would have either colleges or labor workforce which said you know come to us with your program and bring your students or your employers with us so that we can have that dialogue and I think that that's where we want to get to.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): And similar to what Senator Moore was asking about long-range goals or short-term goals, what would you say, other than the move,
is the biggest obstacle that you have found that you need to address once you get relocated on the seventh floor?

TIMOTHY LARSON: I think that because there are eight or nine disciplines that I'm responsible for, I need to figure those out very quickly and sort of get an understanding for them. I think when we talk about back office and data collection and those types of things, one is to expedite the daily workforce functions if you will. The other is to grab the output from those, from that information and then decide where you put your resources. You know we spent $30 million dollars of Roberta Willis and that goes throughout the State of Connecticut which is very important. At some point, are those resources target -- should those be targeted at some point to a vocation? I don't know that yet because I don't have that, but those are some of the ideas that sort of go off in the back of my mind.

We have, you know I'd like to generate sort of a little bit more of an engaging website that's not just a static State of Connecticut sort of, something that when you turn it on you feel like you're ripping through it and you're getting information on both ends, from the student end and from the employer end, so that's sort of like the high energy sort of you know next step sort of thing that I'm trying to get myself to in a, in a very short period of time.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): I don't know if you're going to be able to answer this next question. Maybe you have the answer. I'm trying to remember, at one point in time, I thought that if a university in
Connecticut wanted to adopt a new curriculum if you will or --

TIMOTHY LARSON: A program.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): A degree program, they had to get approval from the Office of Higher Education. Is that still the case? I thought we had a change in the law. I don't remember if it was for a specific --

TIMOTHY LARSON: It's a national organization that you know basically accredits the college and then, depending upon various programs of study would typically come through our agency with the for-profit and non-profit side. All the state side would go through the Board of Regents if you will right? And so that is the discussion right now that we're having is should those, your not-for-profit college, should you have to bring your programs through the office of higher education and so we want to be able to facilitate this information. We don’t want to get in the way but we also want to provide you know some degree of, of what I would refer to as you know some consumer protection.

You know, I have no reason to believe that the approved Office of Higher Education have no other intent that delivering quality programs and services and the best that they can offer, but you know we want to verify that at some point. You know if that's in the upfront before they release these programs or further down the road so we're having that type of a discussion now in Higher Ed. There's current legislation now that we've looked at that allows I believe up to 12 programs to circulate through without our approval on those. So we've identified I believe 213 programs, I should've
brought that with me, I can get that to you, that have not been, that have not been verified by our office.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Is it currently being, is instruction being given under those 213?

TIMOTHY LARSON: Yes.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Do the students get everything, so it's just a matter of having your office signing off on it, on those 213?

TIMOTHY LARSON: There's a, it would be an application that would come into our office. There's sort of a protocol that we would check up on. You know we basically want to make sure that there are enough professors to teach it, that there are enough spaces and you know rudimentary type questions that are verifiable right, and so those are sort of the metric or the checklist that we would go through and if a college you know didn't have it or didn't have enough professors to offer that program, we would, you know we would make some kind of an indication that, that they should you know correct that. Like I said, we're not going to stop a program. We're going to try to get them to conform.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): My last question, Mr. Chairman, thank you, is, is there any conversation between your office and the Department of Education, so there's kind of a conversation at least of a continuum of education offerings from K through postsecondary? Or it's really two distinct functions so it's not, we're not at that place yet?

TIMOTHY LARSON: There very well may be. I would suspect that there is. I'm not personally aware of
that. I can certainly check and get back to you and I think that, I think that there certainly should be.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Thank you very much. Congratulations on your appointment and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Thank you, Senator Witkos. Our Committee co-chair, Senator Duff?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Senator.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Good morning, Senator, how are you?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Very well, thank you. As the other Senators have said, we miss you and wish you all the best obviously in your new position.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): And we've known each other a long time so it's a little difficult to sit here and ask questions of somebody who I know very well and know will do an excellent job in this new role of yours, and I certainly think that you're being mayor, State Rep., State Senator has positioned you well to find solutions to some of the challenges that are faced by growing our tax base and helping to connect people with jobs and all those kinds of good things. Frankly, the other day in my office I met with UTC to talk about having 19,000 jobs here in the state, many of which are in your old district where you live, and growing, and trying to connect what they have opening to our students who need to find well-paying jobs. I think that's something you know firsthand on how to do since a lot of that's in
your backyard and that's only one company that has so many positions to fill and are creating products that are used worldwide.

One area that I want to just mention to you, I'm not expecting an answer at this point, but I think one of the areas in which your office has been most effective or can be most effective is putting and watchdogging, that's not really a word, but being a watchdog to some of the colleges, for-profit colleges around the country that are in Connecticut. That's not to say that they're all bad players, many of whom probably do a good job, but there have been instances where some of these schools have come in, their students take out a tremendous amount of student loans, and then some of them have actually gone bankrupt leaving the students with a pile of debt, no degree and really a lack of accountability. I think that happened a few years ago and it impacted actually a member of my family so I had known about that first hand, and your office with your former director, was very, very good about working to try and bring back some of the money back to the students who are impacted by that, and again working within the parameters that a lot of the good colleges, for-profit colleges work with and trying to weed out some of the bad actors. So I would just bring that to your attention as an area where I think you have some strength and can help because there is a lot of important work to be done bridging students in good-paying jobs and ensuring that you're handing out, you know, the scholarships are done well and getting to the right students and that your office is working with a small staff with I'm sure peak accountability and efficiency.
Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Senator Larson, you have my full support and I know you'll do an excellent job.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Thank you very much, Bob. I appreciate it.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Thank you, Senator Duff. Are there further questions or comments? Yes, Senator Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Thank you very much and good morning for another couple of minutes to you. Tim, it's a pleasure to have you before us, I suppose bittersweet because we do miss you in the Chamber, in the caucus room and in whatever district that was, East Hartford.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Blind spot of America.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): I think we all feel that way don't we? But without a doubt, you’ve come to this position very well poised knowing the maze of government and regulatory process and so forth, but the Office of Higher Education is a very important office and it's gone through a lot of kind of permutations over the years to the extent now that it is overseeing licensure and program offerings and so forth which couldn’t be more important. Small state that we are, we recognize that and also in this era of challenging resources, it's very important that, I mean you see it in healthcare, you see it in every industry and it is clearly here in higher education and so it is very important to know that we are covering the bases, meeting the employment needs that the majority leader talked about and we all live with every day. The incredible demands, quite frankly, that are upon us
and they are all within your realm, and that is higher education. In order to keep this state as the crucial state that it always has been to be recognized for the skilled work force that it is.

So I'm looking forward to working with you on this. I guess I'm wondering and maybe it's a little bit early in the game to ask you this and if so, that's fine, but I'd ask you to consider this as you're moving forward. Is there a look at programming on a statewide basis to recognize that we are offering accessible, and of course always affordable options for people, but not duplicative where we could perhaps expand our offerings as opposed to duplicating our offerings?

TIMOTHY LARSON: Well, thank you and so I don't have that, I'm looking for the right word, I'm trying to still get my arms sort of around this, this whole sort of opportunity. As I commented to Senator Formica and Senate Witkos, I think we need sort of a robust sort of database that says here's the programs that we have for engineering, for nursing, for accounting. Here are the colleges that put these together. Right now, you can go on a website and put in accounting and it'll show you three or four institutes that have that ability. I think we've got to make that a little bit more real, a little bit more robust and I think we can do that as we start to learn what needs are and so forth. So to your point, I don't know to what you know leverage we would have. Let's just use the topic of nursing. How many nursing programs do we need in the State of Connecticut? I think I'm addressing your question correctly. You know, to the extent that we want to have offerings, I think that that's important. I think the fact that we want to have
availability I think is important so we would have to have a conversation on where that duplicity you know cuts you know to our advantage.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): So, yeah, I think it's a conversation that's important and it certainly will be fully vetted as you're moving forward. I'm just concerned because I have witnessed over the years and I have the sense that it hasn't changed all that much. It's kind of like any industry and I say this affectionately to my healthcare, my acute healthcare providers. You go down Route 84 and one day you see oh we do robotic knee surgery. The next day you see, oh, we do robotic knee surgery and we do robotic arm surgery. I have a feeling that goes on in higher ed too. Oh you're doing this and I have been in the room when someone was you know about to be launching a Ph.D. program in education, for example and they said, oh, okay, but you know we can do this too and it's not like that. It's what we need to do. It's not about always being in this competition, it's being in this collaboration and in particular in our public institutions.

And so I leave you with that charge because I think it's very, very important and I want to make last comment which isn’t exactly your, maybe same church, different pew here, and that is this conversation about the Block Grant. In higher education we proceed under this umbrella of what's called a Block Grant and the Block Grant is such that we, the legislature, approve a dollar amount and beyond that, we do not see how that plays out. Now I'm not talking about understanding how many paper clips are purchased or those kinds of things, but I'm talking about a more broad accountability to I think this body that appropriates taxpayer dollars. So it's
been a -- I've always felt like there's this firewall in front of us with regard to higher education financing and so on the one hand, we can't understand how the money plays out and on the other hand, those institutions, if you want to be very blunt about it have the ability to tax by virtue of tuition and fees and we are kind of sitting back here shackled so as the ED of higher education I share that concern with you and you know hope as we go on we can begin to work on these issues. But thanks very much. I'm looking forward to working with you Tim. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Thank you, Senator as well. I was hoping that we might get together and I asked for an opportunity to tour Post University. I know that's in your district and I'd love to take an opportunity to get down there with you and meet the president.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Absolutely.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Okay, looking forward to it, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Thank you, Senator Hartley. Representative Verrengia?

REP. VERRENGIA (20TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a list of questions if you could just indulge me for the next couple of hours. [laughter]

TIMOTHY LARSON: [Cross talk] casino gambling.

REP. VERRENGIA (20TH): The question that keeps coming to the forefront of my mind is your thoughts on East Windsor Casino? No, I'm only kidding. [laughter] You don’t have to answer that. In all seriousness, Tim, I just what to congratulate you on
your nomination. I've had the privilege of working with you for the last four years. I've seen your passion, your commitment to whatever it is that you decide to undertake and this is just another step in the right direction for you and I truly wish you the best.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Thank you, thank you very much.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Thank you, Representative Verrengia. The Chair recognize Representative Phipps, our vice-chair.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Good afternoon, Commissioner. Thank you for coming in front of um -- just a few questions, one that I bet you’ve prepared for because we've been talking about it for weeks now. Specifically, I know at Middlesex Community College, there's several programs, radiology, EMT, vet tech, several jobs that could lead folks on the path to a livable wage, and then there's different options from there that they can go into more dynamic careers that pay well above livable wages so the CNA program leading to being an RN, the EMT to a paramedic, so on and so forth. For instance, the EMT program is about $1000 dollars to take the course at Middlesex. They have an exceptionally high graduation rate, but $1000 dollars if you're making a minimal, making minimum wage would take quite a few, it's actually 149 hours of, after taxes, to be able to pay for a class such as that, and that's if you put every single dollar to go into that course.

Currently, you cannot use financial aid for those programs and I was wondering, what ideas would you have to either open up financial aid for programs that would lead to a state certification and what
options, opportunities would we have available immediately for students to take?

TIMOTHY LARSON: Well first of all, I think the end part of your question I get. I don’t necessarily have purview over the State Community College System if you will. That being said, I think that we have a number of opportunities to provide scholarship programs for various students that go to Connecticut schools, you particularly the Roberta Willis Program. There's applications, most of this is driven off of the FAFSA basis for applying for funds so we would look to you know sort of what I think gets to a large part of what Senator Hartley was talking about is you know where do we maximize our credits and do we have actually have the ability. You know we want to give everybody an opportunity to get a college education. Is it up to us to tell them which college education they're going to get? You know I don't think that's what we want to do. I think we want to provide that platform. I think we want to provide a structured platform. I think we want it to be safe and I think we want it to be affordable and there are clearly instances where it's just not affordable and so I think that there may be opportunities depending upon the outcome that the degree, that maybe the employer has an opportunity to absorb some of those costs. If you talk about you know an EMT that may end up at a municipality or a police officer that may end up there or some fashion of teaching, I think that there may be opportunities on the outside to help support some of those, but you know we effectively facilitate the responsibilities. I'd leave the policy making decisions and the money up to you folks.
REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Thank you. Listen, I recognize that your office doesn’t have direct purview over our community colleges, but I do think the role in terms of workforce development in your office is interrelated. This actually was one of my last questions, but I think you brought it up already. Do you believe that all children that should either go to college or seek additional education outside of their high school education?

TIMOTHY LARSON: You know, yeah, I do. I think that frankly, you know, in today's society, I don't think that a high school diploma is enough and I think that it's incumbent upon us to provide a platform for future advancement. It just is. You know, I mean, I just turned 60 years old and both of my kids have two college degrees and I'm still paying for them frankly, but that was mine and my wife's choice and I just think that, you know I sit here with an IPhone in my pocket that gets updated every six months and I get billed for it and I just think that we need to continue to have a platform that's simple, safe, and affords an individual a pathway forward in education. To Senator Witkos' comments before about a continuum of pre-K through college, I think that's very, very important and I think that's part of what makes Connecticut great. I think we have a huge talent pool of successful programs. We spend a lot of time and energy on public schools and K through 12 and I think we get great results and I think that that we just need to, we need to continue to move on that. I think education is really what we need to market for our state. We're a smart state. We've got a lot of talent here and it's really connecting that talent pool with employers and making sure that kids and adults and so forth
are continuing and making a paycheck and have a decent job and continue to you know contribute back to Connecticut.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Thank you for that. I'm going to actually tend to agree with you so even if you're a plumber or a hairdresser and you're owning your own business, the ability to be able to market one and understand accounting so you understand your profit and loss statements and so on and so forth is incredibly important and I think too often we have shared that not all kids should go to college, I think that has disproportionately hurt communities of color so I appreciate your answer.

In terms of, because your office if I understand correction, has a role in the accreditation process?

TIMOTHY LARSON: Yes.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): What role do you think graduation rates should play in that accreditation process and specifically, when using an equity lens in terms of both race and gender and income?

TIMOTHY LARSON: I'm not certain that, I mean I think finishing college is the accreditation piece. Right, you get a diploma from an accredited school, you run a list of programs in a particular science, if you will, and while you're, you know you're going through that, that's effectively sort of a free will choice, if you will, to go to that school, to follow that discipline, to get you to a point where there is a diploma and that there is in fact in the State of Connecticut an opportunity to turn that into a paycheck or an opportunity for a job.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): But for the institution itself, do you think graduation rates when we look
at them specifically by demographics, do you think that should play a role in the accreditation process?

TIMOTHY LARSON: Well sure, sure. I mean if you're putting up a program of studies and individuals for whatever reason aren't completing it, I think you have to reexamine what that program of study is, right? I mean you're charging for a curriculum that you know doesn’t seem to be accommodating for whatever reason, but you know let's not rebuild the house, let's figure out what's wrong with it and try to get behind that and put an effort in to figure out where those institutions may be coming up short.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): And I agree. I mean the number one indicator of whether or not someone will be able to finish college, in one particular study, we can debate on whether or not the study was correct, was mother's education. If their mother graduated from college, then they had a very high likelihood that they would graduate from college so I want to make sure that for communities that were previously left out of the higher education process, that the schools under your purview are looking at that so we can be particular. I think the baseball saying is if it's not measured or tracked, then it doesn’t matter, so if we're not looking at graduate rates in terms of the demographics, it leaves opportunities for folks to be left behind so.

TIMOTHY LARSON: I also think we have a handful of programs that are targeting that not only in sort of the coming out of high school, those types of things, but we have this minority advancement concept. We have an opportunity to get more minority teachers involved in education at the
teaching level. I have a niece that's a social studies teacher at East Hartford High School. East Hartford High School is you know probably 80 percent minority and there are not a significant amount of minority teachers there. I think that we need to make an effort to do that because I think it does make a difference, I really do.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): And also if you could speak to the role that for-profit colleges play in our state in particular and I'm going to kind of combine some national statistics along with kind of our state, statistics that I think are important to recognize. So and I would say the numbers are fairly accurate if I remember correctly. For for-profit schools on a national level, they have a 22 percent graduation rate versus our public schools that have about a 55 percent graduation rate and private schools have a 65 percent. That difference, and I wondered if there's a connection between the goal of, the primary goal of making profit versus the primary goal of education children. Can you speak to how we think our for-profit schools could be better empowered to make sure that their graduation rates are more closely related to our non-profit colleges, but I would also state that 55 or 75 percent of graduation rates are low to make them work, but I think 22 percent is fairly abysmal.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Right, so I think that you know the opportunities in the Office of Higher Education as it relates to licensing and accreditation, I think we look at the volume and the body of work and the cost and those sorts of things and we sort of try to put that opportunity you know and sort of test that if you will. You have some of these distant learning colleges where you're literally online and
that school is based not in Connecticut, you know we want to make sure that those types of programs you know fit our particular specifications if you will so that we're forever vigilant on that sort of program adaption so that again, if you are producing a program in the State of Connecticut and an individual in the State of Connecticut is taking one of those, that there is opportunity for access and that it is a credible and that at some point it does end up into a career path. You know some people decide to do something different halfway through college and that's sort of a variable, and I think we have to provide for that in some form or fashion.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): When Lincoln closed, it left a lot of students unprepared, there wasn't a lot of information about that. What role do you think your department could have to prevent a future experience like that?

TIMOTHY LARSON: Well I can't testify to something I wasn't part of. I do understand that we do have resources, that when we are evaluating and we are sort of testing, colleges have the opportunity to "teach out" or transfer credits to and be accommodated at some other level. I also understand that there may be some pocketed fee that, where tuition may be able to be returned to individuals, I'm getting this third party, so I just would reserve my comments on Lincoln cause I don't know that I know enough about that, but I know that there are systems in place that would allow colleges, when they do fail, to either sort of teach out, reimburse. I mean there are straight consumer protection avenues, I believe that students could take advantage of in addition to resources that we may be able to provide.
REP. PHIPPS (100TH): So I thank you for obliging the Representative. I think today is day 55 on the job, so I didn’t get the opportunity and pleasure to work with you but I'm looking forward to making sure that all children and all scholars have the opportunity to have a dynamic education in higher education cause not only is it a path to I think enlighten, but to be frank, it's also a path to financial viability so I appreciate your answers. Thank you.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Thank you, Representative Phipps. Any further questions or remarks from Committee members? If not, I want to joint my colleagues in congratulating you on this voice of confidence, Governor Lamont has responsibilities placed on your shoulders. As I said earlier, I think you're well prepared for the job and I wish success and that concludes this portion, but before I let you go, there's a question I ask of all of our nominees, and that is, is there anything in your past that would prove embarrassing to this Committee, to the Governor or to the State?

TIMOTHY LARSON: I don't believe so.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Well thank you very much.

TIMOTHY LARSON: Thank you and I would just extend an opportunity for you once we are settled in our new abode on the seventh floor, to have you come by and meet some of the people who are actually involved in each one of these disciplines. I know that we are testifying this afternoon in Higher Ed on a couple of different issues, but make sure, and I'll invite you personally to come by and speak with
directly some of the people that manage some of these programs. I think you will be super excited and convinced that we're really on top of things in that department, so thank you.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Thank you for the invitation. That concludes the first nominee's presentation. Now, we're moving on to the second nominee. This one is a Senate Joint Resolution, Mr. David Jimenez of Hartford to be a member of the Board of Regents for Higher Education. Before you take a seat, please raise your right hand. Do you promise to tell us the truth and nothing but the truth?

DAVID JIMENEZ: I do.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Please be seated. As is customary, we're going to allow you to make an original presentation. When we conclude all the interviews, we'll take a short recess and then we'll have our voting session. We'll allow the public, if there's anyone who wants to make comments to make comments. I noticed earlier we had Representative Gregory Haddad from the Higher Education Committee was present listening to the first nominee. We also keep our votes open until 4 p.m. to make sure that any Committee member that's not here during our voting session gets an opportunity to vote. Without further ado, Mr. Jimenez, the floor is yours.

DAVID JIMENEZ: Thank you. Good morning or good afternoon now, Senator Duff and Representative Vargas and distinguished members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. My name is David Jimenez and I'm honored to have been nominated by Governor Lamont to serve another term on the Board of Regents for Higher Education and I thank you for allowing me to say a few words about myself and my
background. At the outset, however, I want to point out and I must say what a pleasure and a privilege it's been to serve on the Board of Regents for the last four years or so, and to do that with my highly accomplished colleagues on the Board of Regents, all of whom served selflessly in a completely voluntary capacity.

I think I can speak on behalf of all the Regents when I say that ultimately, we do this work because we love our state and we believe in the importance of higher education for the future of our youth as well as for the future of our state, and Representative Phipps, I really appreciate your comments about the importance of higher education. My mother was a teacher and I think that some of the words that you spoke to earlier ring true to me.

I've lived in Connecticut for about 20 years, mostly in Simsbury, although recently I moved to Hartford. I just couldn't put up with the drive time, but a beautiful place to raise three children, all of whom went through the high school system. My oldest is now in college and what I want to point out is that although I am from parts far away, originally from Los Angeles, California and went to University of Texas undergrad and went to law school in New York, for the last 20 years as an adult, as a professional, Connecticut has been my home of choosing. I truly value and love this state.

I've been an attorney for about 30 years now and in the last 12 years, I've been a principal with the Law Firm Jackson Lewis where I serve as a national co-chair of corporate governance and internal investigations, and devote most of my practice to corporate governance and corporate compliance
matters. Before Jackson Lewis, I was the Associate General Counsel and the Vice-President of Employee Relations for the Hartford Insurance Company, which at that point was a global organization of about 36,000 or so employees, and I was there for about 10 years of my career.

As you can probably tell from my CV, my legal experience has been focused on matters involving employment law, human resources practices, business litigation and corporate governance generally. I regularly advise senior management of organizations and the boards of publicly held organizations and companies. As I mentioned, I have a bachelor's degree from University of Texas and my law degree is from Hofstra.

Beyond law, I have had the opportunity and the privilege to serve on many other boards here in Connecticut including currently as President of the Board of the Hartford Stage Theater Company, a former trustee of the Mark Twain House of Museum, and a former board member of the Charter Oak Cultural Center. I was also previously appointed by Governor Malloy to serve on the Commission for Physical Stability and Economic Growth, which many know as the Fiscal Commission.

You know through this work and my service on various boards, I want to say that I am deeply committed to serving the state and I'm a deep believer in the importance of higher education. I've seen what education can do for our youth. I can see how it can help I believe like no other catalyst advance individuals in terms of their growth, in terms of their economic potential and I have to tell you that one of the best pleasures, best perks if you will of
being on the Board of Regents these last four years is that we each commit to attending at least two graduation ceremonies and I value that because I think it really brings together what service on the Regents is all about which is seeing the many stories, particularly when you go to a community college and you witness the fact that we have, we have students that range in age from 17 to 77, we have returning vets, we have grandparents, we have all kinds of stories of success. And the value of a certificate, the value of a community college education and essentially the passport if you will to future education is powerful and it really charges me up. I believe it has an impact on all the Regents. It really keeps us going through some really trying times that we deal with on the Regents as you can imagine.

I'm very proud of the work we do. I serve on the Human Resources Committee. I also serve on the Finance Committee of the Regents and I'm a member of the Executive Committee. I look forward to continuing with this very important work. These are challenging times. It's all about trying to do more with less it seems these days and at times, I know that we perhaps are misunderstood. I'm confident that we are headed in the right direction and I thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I'll be happy to answer any questions you have.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Thank you very much for your initial presentation and congratulations on your reappointment to the Board of Regents. One of the questions that some of our colleagues including Representative Haddad who was here in the audience not too long ago there, and it's one of the issues I believe is of concern to many people in the higher
education community is the whole idea of the Students First proposal and how that is going. I understand that NEASC turned down the first proposal and that there have been a lot of faculty and alumni and others that have signed a petition trying to stop that initiative. How do you think it's going? I know that the Board of Regents authorized it to go forward if I recall correctly. What's your feelings on that?

DAVID JIMENEZ: Well it is going forward and I think it's going forward well. I believe that it is a significant change, a significant change. Effort and change makes many of us uncomfortable. There are many stakeholders. There are many people with interests and many people with a different option. What I can say about Students First is that at its core was about providing a community college opportunity everywhere we do now and the idea was, how do we continue and build on that without shutting down campuses in a world where we have declining revenue, declining funding for community colleges? How do we continue to keep those doors open and make this affordable, not put the cost of community college education, the increased cost on students? And so the idea was let's bring it together, let's bring the system together, let's find synergies, let's find efficiencies that are available so that we can continue to deliver on the mission here.

I will say that there is certainly are differences of opinions, but I was very satisfied as a Regent as this plan was put together and it took quite some time to put together this plan. I was very satisfied that all of the various stakeholders were not consulted, but made a part of the plan and given
the opportunity to identify their project team members if you will, so whether it was the faculty community, whether it was the student community, whether it was the administrators or others along the way, they were all given the opportunity to be a part of the planning process and a part of the implementation process.

I would also say that from an accreditation perspective, there was by President Ojakian and his staff significant efforts at outreach with this accreditation agency, with NEASC, and I would say that I don't believe that the final message from NEASC was we disagree or wrong direction. Their message to us was you're moving faster than we're ready to move with you because we have to essentially do our due diligence and we have to test this and we have to see you regionalize this in a programmatic way, not with the flip of a switch so I don't believe that NEASC has at any time said no, and now way; they've just said we want to just slow it down and we want to be part of the process along the way. And we also learned the fact that you can't just simply work with the Board of NEASC or with the staff of NEASC, you have to work with both because ultimately, whatever the staff is on board with, that's great but their Board of Directors has to be brought along the way. I don't know what kind of communication there was between the NEASC staff and the NEASC board, but now it's on us to make sure that the communication is solid because they are key stakeholders in this. But Representative Vargas, I don’t dispute your perspective that you know for some individuals it's been uncomfortable, and I think that's part of change and the good news there is that in President Ojakian, we have someone who's
a tremendous communicator and has made every effort
to reach out to all of those stakeholders and get
their input.

I feel that things are moving along very well now.
I think we are in the process now of hiring regional
presidents. I'm chairing one of the search
committee efforts with a goal of helping us
regionalize these community colleges and then really
leverage the resources available, the systems, the
personnel and I think from a student perspective,
make it more available to the student to transfer
through the system if they will. If they want to
take a course that's not available at the community
college in their area, to be able to go elsewhere
and really leverage all of the state's resources for
the purpose of that student's goals and aspirations.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): That's interesting because in
the response that NEASC made to the first
application, they, they felt that the vision of
Student First proposal would lead to a new
institution, but I understand that in the
resubmission, it was not presented as a new
institution, but rather as a substantive change.
Any thoughts on that?

DAVID JIMENEZ: I believe the latter is more
accurate. We aren’t, we aren’t building a new wheel
here. We are leveraging existing foundations and an
existing system that is accredited and we're looking
to bring it together in a way that will I think be
of benefit to students and from the perspective I
spoke to earlier, enable us to do more with less.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Well I want to thank you for,
with your background especially in human resources
and the legal aspects of human resources and
employment law, that you're willing to give of your time voluntarily to help the State of Connecticut in your role as a Regent and at this point, I'm going to open it to my fellow Committee members. Yes, Representative Davis, you have the floor.

REP. DAVIS (57TH): Thank you and thank you for your service on the Board. I know it's a voluntary position so I appreciate your willingness to do so. One question that often comes up from constituents of mine, and I find myself asking the same question, and as a member of the Board of Regents, I think you have a unique insight on it, is why is it that we have so many state universities in Connecticut, we have four of them, and so many community colleges in Connecticut when we have declining enrollment? We have a university that is literally 10 minutes down the road from the University of Connecticut in Storrs to Eastern. We have, each one of these universities generally speaking do similar programs or offer the same programs as all the other ones and they're not specialized as like a teachers' college anymore or an engineering college or anything like that and what's your perspective on the saturation of colleges in the State of Connecticut?

DAVID JIMENEZ: I mean I think part -- there's a couple of answers to that that come to mind. You know one is each university and each community college I would submit to you has a story of its own, right? There is a community around that institution, there are alumni around that, and there is a core focus in many instances around each of these institutions. It would, it would, it would not be fair to suggest that these universities don't each have their identity, their own brand, and their own sort of place in higher education. Each of
these universities has a strength and that strength is represented in the alumni that they attract, the students that they attract. So they each have I think powerful stories on their own.

The same is true with the community colleges and our goal is to make sure that we sustain them and make them available to our students here in Connecticut because ultimately, we believe that the state benefits to the extent that our youth who are not going to elsewhere are able to attend these universities. No doubt, UConn is a formidable university and a terrific institution. I know that at Simsbury High School, many students cannot get into UConn. It is a competitive university and so the question becomes, well if they can't get into UConn where are they going to go? Right? Now, some are going to leave the state, but my hope is they won't leave the state.

My hope is that they're going to find that they can, they can attain and go to a school that is as strong, as capable of providing them with a meaningful four-year institution as the ones that we have here in Connecticut. So I guess the fundamental answer that I have to your colleagues and your constituents is we have them because they are viable, we need them, our students need those choices, but I think underneath your question is a very fair question which is where's the due diligence here? Where's the fiscal responsibility and accountability? We have to manage these institutions in a way that is sustainable and there is a great deal of complexity in doing that. It's not like a business, right? It's not like I can just, we can do a reduction in force and give two weeks' notice and close this shop and open up this
place over here and make sure that our profit margin is what our shareholder wants. That is not the way it works, I have come to learn [laughs] after four years of being on the Regents. It's a lot more complicated, but I agree with the -- I think one of the premises of your question which is we can't simply run an institution for a loss. We can be not-for-profit, we can be for the betterment, but it can't just simply exist for a loss so we do have that obligation and I will submit that by having combined a state university system, right, a number of years ago and now as we seek to combine the community college system and integrate all of the data, all of the information, all of the systems, all of the academics, we will be better stewards of the Connecticut taxpayers' money and how we administer that with these institutions. If it's a 16-institution organization, that becomes, there's a lot of redundancy and that becomes very difficult. By unifying it, I think we will be able to answer to the premise of your constituents' concern.

REP. DAVIS (57TH): Thank you and a followup if I could, Mr. Chairman, through you?

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Sure, go ahead.

REP. DAVIS (57TH): To that point, and I know the attempts to try to consolidate as you mentioned before and, and I don't know the nuances of accreditation to know if it's even possible, but one of the things that struck me is that each one of these, at least the four universities all have very similar goals of a full education of specializing in all the different fields, having different colleges of liberal arts and sciences and mathematics and engineering. Would it be better suited as a system
for the State of Connecticut, being such a small state, that maybe one of these universities specializes in engineering, and engineering based in STEM based academics, and then you have another university that specializes in education and social services and things like that. Is that even a possibility of their accreditation or is that something, cause one of the benefits, as you mentioned, of being a system now rather than individual colleges is being able to find those efficiencies and being able to provide the best education opportunities available to people, but maybe in a specialized way that can utilize both and achieve those efficiencies.

DAVID JIMENEZ: I think that long-term that is something that can happen in a variety of ways. I don’t see it necessarily as a top-down kind of outcome where President Ojakian says we're going to have a liberal arts college and we're going to have an engineering college. I think it has to come by way of a shared governance model, right? These institutions do have their strength. As I think of Central Connecticut and as I think of Eastern Connecticut, to me those are very different schools with very different strengths, different brands outside of Connecticut regionally, but I do think that as a system, we have those universities present in the same room every month meeting with President Ojakian. The ability to be more aware of having the left know what the right is doing and knowing what is, what is more competitive and how we, how we position ourselves in the marketplace, all of that is increasing tenfold by virtue of the fact that we now have a centralized state university system. So I do see that happening, but that's a lot of change.
What you're suggesting I would submit is more revolutionary than what we're doing with community colleges, right? So we have to deal with accreditation issues, we have to deal with faculty who are not, may not favor that and we may have you know other constituents to speak to if you take on that kind of very pragmatic effort. I get the pragmatism in that, but it would, that would be revolutionary and we might really get in trouble there [laughs].

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Well, yeah, geography too, if I want to do engineering, it turns out that it's in the other end of the state, you know there's a lot of transportation issues we're still dealing with as a state and so I can see all the if's and but's that will emerge on any proposal like that but I appreciate your testimony. Any other member of the Committee? Yes, Representative Godfrey, you have the floor.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Congratulations. I represent Danbury. In fact, this morning I was at Western with Presidents Ojakian and Clark and learning more and more about some of the newer offerings that Western is getting involved in, especially on the science end of things. They are now offering a master's degree to those who are dealing with the opioid addiction crisis, just totally eye-opening. We're very proud of the university certainly. I'm one of those believers that cities that succeed are cities that attract a creative class and certainly a major institution of higher education is one of the, one of the tags on creating that kind of a community, and they've been such an incredible service to not only the city of Danbury, but all the surrounding
towns. It's a good chunk of Western Connecticut and now of course, as you know, even eastern New York State nearby. That state line is just a geopolitical line. It has nothing to do with the economy or the fact that you know, Danbury is the biggest city for most of that part of New York State that come to shop and everything else and so we're certainly grateful to see that.

We're also very proud that we've got a branch of Naugatuck Valley Committee College right in the heart of our downtown like at a major crossroad on Main Street and West Street that is producing an incredible amount of graduates, as is Western, who have jobs waiting for them in the Danbury labor market. The cooperation with both of those institutions of higher education with local employers is just fantastic, a constant back and forth, a lot of dialogue, what are the new jobs that are going to be here in two or four years that we can prepare our students for, the emphasis on technology, on STEM in general has been a big help.

One of the things about, it's over a decade now, when we opened the new science building in the downtown campus, Moody's actually bumped up the economic prognostications simply because it was opening and we saw this morning a student who's a graduate of the science part just describe in great detail, it made a little squeamish, about Lyme disease and ticks [laughs] and I'm going, the potential Moody saw has been realized and just, just incredible, incredible numbers of very highly educated now graduates. We're so grateful for both of those institutions in Danbury especially with the collaboration both had with Danbury Hospital. Naugatuck Valley's branch in Danbury is very heavily
populated by people who want to get into the healthcare industry, we're so grateful for that and of course, Western has cooperative arrangements with Danbury Hospital in the Nursing Program, another very big economic driver and a realizer of dreams that, that we're so happy to have so we certainly want to continue to keep both of those institutions happy, healthy and turning out graduates. It's very important to all of us. And there are concerns and we raised some of them this morning. I'm one of those who is more and more concerned about the overreliance on tuition. I think that some of the applications are down because more and more people can't afford it. The whole issue of student debt of course we're wrestling with here more often than not. That's becoming a bigger, a growing problem every day so we certainly are concerned that -- I don't think, as Representative Vargas mentioned, that certainly the four state universities let alone the community colleges need to specialize in something and shed other disciplines because they are designed to fill jobs in the labor market in which they stand. We've long been a teachers' college. A lot of people have been remarking on the growth in our, in the, the arts in, at Western, that gorgeous new building that's been used quite a lot, and we're feeding a lot of television jobs in Stanford, for example. Again, we've got a connection between the education and work that we're delighted to have.

So we're very concerned, and I certainly would oppose any idea of okay, this university is going to do only this because I think what is sometimes lost perhaps in the popular imagination, it's not kids doing four years. It's not anybody who thinks going
away to college and living in a dorm is going to be in their lifestyle. These colleges and universities are still commuter-oriented. They're serving their catchment area and we need to continue to provide in all of our public higher education institutions that connection with both the consumer, the student and the, the, the commercial and industrial employers, and I would definitely oppose any idea of you know Western's going to be arts and Eastern is going to be something else. It just doesn’t work and so I'm hoping, I'm all but sure that you share some of these concerns. The overreliance on tuition especially and trying to find alternative ways of continuing to provide a very high level of public higher education. The geography as Representative Vargas said makes a difference too.

So I'm sorry that we don’t provide enough financial help even after all of this time and I've been up here a very long time. We still rank in like the bottom five states of our support of higher education institutions and I'm glad you're helping try and find solutions. So I'm interested in a little bit more on your take on some of these things I just mentioned actually.

DAVID JIMENEZ: Thank you. Well, so first of all, as to some of your observations about the impact and the benefits to the city of Danbury, the surrounding areas, the geography, I think what you’ve eluded to or referenced is exactly part of the calculus here is that these institutions give back. Not only do they empower our youth to go and be productive citizens. They add a great deal of vitality to the areas where they're present. That leads to a certain kind of relationship between industry and education and I would argue that it enriches many
beyond just simply the student right? So it's a very powerful way for any geographic region to succeed and move forward. You see it in Hartford by virtue of the fact that a number of universities put down a campus in the city of Hartford. We now have more feet on the street, there's more restaurants, there's more vitality and that brings in more residents and so on and so forth so no doubt that the presence of a higher academic institution pays back in many ways that are not so, so obvious.

I agree with you that we don’t want to put on the backs of our students the rising cost of tuition and it would be, it would be a nice thing to see if the state could allocate more for higher education. In the absence of that, we have to consider many, many things and I've been on the board four years. I'm still learning everyday things that I took for granted because you're right; this is not a population that says oh I'm graduating from high school, I'm going to go away for four years, I get a car for a gift and you know life is great. This is a whole different kind of student population that we're dealing with.

You know three weeks ago if you had said, what does our most needy students need, I'd say well you know, free education. But then I came to learn that 60 percent of, you know of our population of students, the most that need the most assistance essentially attend tuition free when you take into account the federal Pell grants and other assistance that they receive. What they really need is transportation. They need a bus pass to get from point A to point B to do the internship that you're talking about. So not having a clear understanding of those needs can lead to some very bad decision-making about what to
do with extra, extra dollars. So I'm with you 100 percent. We don't want to just simply raise tuition. That's not the answer. There are more creative ways. There's partnerships, there's internships that we have to go up. There's foundations you know around each one of these institutions. There is a very caring foundation, there's alumni that provide tuition assistance and you know we continue to tackle the issue.

I have a lot of confidence, a great deal of confidence in our system office and President Ojakian and all of the leaders, the leadership of the universities as they continue to tackle this and it's something that the Board of Regents takes very seriously. We're not just going to simply sit back and say well let's just jack up tuition and then we'll get to a balanced budget. That's not what we're doing. We are taking on the more difficult, I would submit, more difficult issues of change. Change management, changing the structure, changing delivery, leveraging resources, but that upsets some individuals and some constituents for very reasonable reasons, but, but I think that's what we have to do.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): I've often observed our kind of unofficial motto, the land of steady habits. I interpret that to mean we're for progress so long as no change is involved [laughs] and so that's the kind of thing you're tackling every time you go to a board meeting, I'm sure it's very difficult, but when I see our institutions down my way actually going into a number of the local public schools, the high schools so that the graduates who do wind up in Naugatuck Valley or Western don't need to take remedial courses, that those are done while they're
still in high school, that kind of, I think they call it the bridge, it's innovative. It's been working. I think that that the board has been addressing a lot of these system problems that are not really unique to Connecticut, they're a systemic problem for higher education like everywhere and so, if you're ever visiting Danbury, let me know. I'd love to go over to the campus. Like I said, I was over there this morning, eye opening as always, and congratulations. Thank you.

DAVID JIMENEZ: Thank you, Representative Godfrey.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Thank you, Representative Godfrey. Senator Witkos, you have the floor.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, sir, for agreeing to volunteer again for another four-year term. You know I think when the board was first culminated it had a very, very rocky start and I think it was doomed until President Ojakian arrived with a steady hand and I think I've seen progress and stability and a comfort level under his leadership, but I'm curious to know from a Regents perspective, is there more that we can do effectuate the changes that, through President Ojakian that he's looking for through the Board of Regents? I know you've submitted a plan to NEASC again and I'm still bewildered that one arm of government telling another government to slow down, that you're going a little bit too fast which is just amazing to me, but are we in a good place right now from a Regents perspective as to where the board is and the actions that have taken place thus far under President Ojakian?

DAVID JIMENEZ: Well it's a great question. You know I kind of want to say ask me in two years, but
I believe we are in the right place. Look, I think this kind of change in higher education is dramatic. When we started down this path a couple of years ago, I and other Regents, I won't take full credit, said to President Ojakian, you know, where has this been done before? Where is that consultant that we can bring in and say here's what we learned in state X to apply here or things to watch out for? It really hasn't been done in too many comparable states. The examples of the past were few and they are very sort of detail and site specific so what was done in Texas or what was done in California doesn't entirely translate here because we have many other sort of very individualized factors, you know whether it's SEBAC or collective bargaining as a whole whether it's NEASC versus other accrediting institutions.

So I believe we are on the right path. It is bold. I mean I'm chairing right now a search committee for a regional president which is a job that doesn't exist, right? We've created three regional president jobs. We're hiring, we are interviewing and plan to hire these, these regional presidents for an organization that hasn't yet fully landed, right, so it is bold, it is big, but I think that the thinking is right. I think that the stakeholder involvement is there now in a way that I think people just can't disagree. I mean you should see how methodical every decision point is and how many people have to weigh in before we move forward on any issue so I think the process is right, the direction is right, but I want to be careful and say, you know we've got to stay vigilant and make sure that our relationship with accrediting agency is robust and that we never let it lift off that.
And I also feel like the regents that we have in place have the experience of this process over the last couple of years and that's serving us well. So I thank you for your question, but my quick answer, I believe we are in the right direction and it feels like we've got all the right stakeholders at the table.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): And I would applaud your effort and I think that the board has moved actually very quickly on a lot of different initiatives, I think has done our state and our higher education well and that is -- a couple of examples and then I'll get into, leading into my question. In the advanced manufacturing program and spreading that to the five community colleges to creating the pathways all the way through for allowing, as Representative Godfrey had said, you know being able to take college classes in your sophomore year in high school so you already have a year of college under your belt when you arrive at the community college. I mean all those are fantastic too. Trying to bring border students into Connecticut at in-state tuition rate so we can start filling some of those seats, all fantastic, fantastic initiatives, but we still see a decline, not in all of the institutions. I was just up at Northwest Community College a couple of weeks ago with President Ojakian who's making the rounds, and I was pleased to see there's either 4 percent or 9 percent in student enrollment there.

How do we position ourselves so we can continue, because otherwise it's going to rely on if we can't fund you here in the state, it's going to be tuition increase, how do we make sure that we continuously have that we continuously have our student population either maintain or increase given that
we're seeing — Representative Davis's concern is that we're a small state with a lot of institutions, how can we maintain what we've got, the infrastructure, making sure we bring in all these students when, I'll let, I'll let you answer that question and then I've got a followup.

DAVID JIMENEZ: Well I think that's a big question, right, that's, how do we succeed with sort of the demographics that we have and the trends that we have. There are some upward trends among some of the community colleges and if you look at the last ten years, some are up, some are down, but I think in general, I think it's fair to say there has been a decline. I think, you know, the outreach that we're doing in various communities and at the high school level that's very important. I think we have to, we have to do a better job of making it clear to graduating high school seniors that they've got great opportunity right here in Connecticut, affordable education that can really enable them to go far, whether they want to just simply graduate in two years, get a four-year or go onto grad school, we have excellent institutions here that I don't believe we tout enough.

I think often our high school and our high school seniors, as they approach that senior year are thinking, how do I get out of here? I want to go to New York, I want to go to Boston or you know, it is somewhat the chip on the shoulder that I think all of Connecticut has suffered in one form or another and I think we have to break through that by leveraging these institutions. I think by unifying the community college system, having a Connecticut Community College System, we're going to be able to speak about it in a much more strategic way in terms
of its offerings and in terms of the return on investment much better than 12 smaller institutions, right? We're going to speak with a common voice, we're going to have data, we're going to have a plan if you will that is much more forceful, and the same goes I think with the various state universities so getting aggressive and putting our case out there and pursuing those high school seniors I think is a big part of the equation.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): And just two last questions. One is a followup. We're often told that 85 percent of the students that graduate from the Board of Regents systems stay in Connecticut. Do we do any type of outreach to those alumni to say, you know, what was your experience? You know what was your first choice or your second choice? What economic factors, if any, came into play or demographics for transportation and what can we do as a system to promote ourselves to students similar to you or to reach a different demographic of students?

DAVID JIMENEZ: You know it's a great point. I mean you do this in business, right? We see our business colleagues always reach out to the customer, say how was your experience? What can we do better? The quick answer is no, not enough of that. We're not doing that enough. My understanding, cause I've asked President Ojakian and his staff about that -- A lot of students sometimes just sort of, you know we, we hear from them, they graduate and they're gone. They're off our radar screen and we don't keep up with them. Better data, better systems and processes I think will enable that because we need that. We need to have from the student perspective. What we do have at the table now is a student advisory committee, a very vocal student advisory
committee telling us everything we do wrong, you know, while they're students [laughter] as they should. They are a terrific voice at the table, but there seems to be an end to that communication once they move on with their lives and so through technology now especially, there's no reason why we can't do better and certainly I would be an advocate for that.

SENATOR WITKOS (8TH): Well you just set me up for a perfect segue-way to my last question, technology. Could you address the Charter Oak College as part of our, it's our online, as you know, college and we don't hear enough about that and I'm just curious as to what we're doing to promote that or is our enrollment up or down or where do you see that as part of the overall plan for the next generation?

DAVID JIMENEZ: Well, I think, I'll say a few words about it. I think it's a terrific institution and I know that many people have had, many alumni have had terrific success starting there. They also recently had a comeback to get ahead initiative that was fabulously successful. A lot of people who are later in career actually enrolled and took additional courses, certifications in order to get ahead in their career, and it met and surpassed targets that were created for that initiative, and I think that's just a wave of the future, right? Online learning is a place that we have to be present and we have to do it well. I think for the future of Charter Oak, the question will be how do we leverage Charter Oak in a way that not only supports that institution, but also supports the needs of the other components of the system, the universities and the community colleges. I am, you know one of my pet peeves is redundancies, right,
and so what I don't want is each institution having its online organization and so the question is how do we, how do we leverage Charter Oak in support of all of those in the form of Center of Excellence if you will and I think that is TBD, that's to be determined as we go forward and make our way through the accreditation and the Student First initiative, but that is on the horizon.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Thank you, Senator Witkos. Any other member of the Committee wishing to speak? Yes, the Chair recognizes Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you, Mr. Jimenez for being here and serving on the Board of Regents, and your commitment to higher education. I just have one question. I speak to four-year university professors and faculty and community college professors and faculty and they, they complain to me that many times, they'll need more help but they get more administration over faculty or other teachers. I don't know if you'll address that or if you've heard the same complaint where there's, there's hiring of administrators sometimes not needed, but they need more faculty. I've heard that a number of times.

DAVID JIMENEZ: To be honest with you, I've not heard that feedback. No one has said that to me that we need more faculty and instead, we're getting more administrators. I know that you know in some circles, I know that faculty members don't understand sort of the system office and the staff that we have at the system office and I think there's some tension, to be very blunt, there's some tension about that and my impression over the last four years is that we're very measured in terms of
administrative staff that are hired. We're very measured in terms of any hiring, right? So I would not be surprised by the first part of your question that we could all use more help, we could all use more faculty to do more things. Part of bringing the system together is to address that, right, so if you, if you want to take a particular class in a particular language that, that your institution doesn’t offer, the ability to satellite that in from another institution and to get credit that's going to be of equal value in your institution, all of that is realized in a system versus 12 independent community colleges that aren’t speaking to one another. So I think that's a longwinded way of saying my hope is to support those faculty needs by virtue of the fact that the system will bring more resources to bear on whatever their challenges are. I don't know and I haven’t witnessed that our administrative hiring is in lieu of faculty hiring.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Thank you for that answer. That's just, people email me or call me or they'll feel comfortable enough to say something to me and I would hope, and I'm sure you do look at the measuring as far as the faculty and the administrators.

DAVID JIMENEZ: Indeed.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

DAVID JIMENEZ: Thank you, Representative.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Thank you, Representative Yaccarino. Yes, Representative Godfrey?

REP. GODFREY (110TH): Just as a followup to Representative Yaccarino, I hear the same thing and
I also hear just throw this into the mix, when faculty gets hired, it's adjunct rather than full time so continue to work on those. It contributes to a little lack of morale, more complaints than I'd like to hear and I think it's, while the heart of the university is the library, the soul is the faculty so there's, and I'm hearing this from not just faculty members. I'm hearing this from students so do please keep an eye on that. Representative Yaccarino is absolutely right.

DAVID JIMENEZ: Understood. Will do.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): Any other committee member wishing to, one quick question from Representative Phipps who's our House Vice-chair.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Thank you for your service to the community. You begin to speak about the unified system and how do we balance the savings that we'll have on the economy of scale by taking a regional approach, but also making sure that the unique campuses have those direct connections to the community and specifically, I know that it's Dan Winkler from Middlesex has made tremendous outreach to community leaders, business leaders, so on and so forth, so how do we balance those two goals that often seem mutually exclusive, but I think in many ways they be tied to together a lot more than we give credit for?

DAVID JIMENEZ: There is a delicate balance between taking on a regional and systemic approach and making sure you don’t disregard your local communities of support, right, and that, that balance is reflected in our, in our blueprint if you will of how this regional system will work meaning our regional presidents that will oversee three
community colleges will work with each campus leader to make sure that that connective tissue isn’t compromised. In other words, while we have a system to serve and to leverage across the state, the life blood of each of these campuses is that local community and we have to make sure that from a foundation perspective and alumni perspective, a jobs' perspective, internships, that's where the action is going to happen.

I would put it in a simplistic way. That's sort of the front-facing part of the house, right, with the students, the employers, the community. In the back of the house, right, the administrative, the IT, human resources, other systems where we can share and leverage at a system level and realize savings, that's where I have a lot of energy, but I think you're absolutely right that that is sort of the key to success, having the right balance, that balance is spoken to and addressed and every job description that's being put together, when we interview candidates for that regional president position. I sat at the Sheridan Hotel a week or so ago and interviewed seven candidates for region two which is the region that I'm chair of the search committee. Those are the kind of questions we're asking and the good news is that the candidates that we're seeing, some of them come from that kind of a system, a so-called matrix organization right, where they've got line of site to a campus, but also accountability to a system and balancing the dynamics that go with that. We have to keep that in focus and we have to make sure that we scorecard ourselves and that we are succeeding on both fronts.

REP. VARGAS (73RD): I have to excuse myself for a few minutes. I have to get some votes into Labor
Committee, but I cede the Chair to my vice-Chair, Representative Phipps.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): And in the spirit of brevity, I won't belabor the questions. I know, I don't want to ask it three times, but I will suggest that, in looking for support and friends on the Board of Regents and those that are supporting our students, especially at the community college level, to the programs that I was talking about, those programs that can lead to not only a livable wage but well-paying jobs and opportunities to take care of their family and I will say that it is -- I'm concerned. I'm concerned about the inequity of having so 149 hours if you're currently making minimum wage to pay for a course like the EMT program or the radiology program. It doesn't seem fair, it doesn't seem right, but also to Senator Duff and I think Senator Davis also talked about it before, these are jobs that our community and our businesses are saying they want, they need. We need the trained employees to do so, so let's find a way that is economically viable and equitable for our vulnerable students to be able to find these career opportunities.

DAVID JIMENEZ: Indeed.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): All right. Are there any other questions from my colleagues? Seeing none, just one final question, I'm going to read it exactly. We have one final question that we ask all nominees. Is there anything in your past that would prove embarrassing to this Committee, the Governor or to the State?

DAVID JIMENEZ: No.
REP. PHIPPS (100TH): All right. Thank you for speaking in front of us.

DAVID JIMENEZ: Thank you.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): We'll go right into the next one, is that fine with everyone? So we'll call on Elease Wright of Hartford and this is a House Joint Resolution for the member of Board of Regents also for higher education. Do you swear to tell the truth, and you can raise your right hand, do you swear to tell the truth?

ELEASE E. WRIGHT: Yes, I do.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): All right. Please have a seat.

ELEASE E. WRIGHT: Is this on? Go ahead?

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Oh yeah if you can see the lights on the, the mike. Also as customary, we'll let you open with your opening statements and we're glad to have you here.

ELEASE E. WRIGHT: Thank you, Representative Perillo and good afternoon to all of the Senators and Representatives who are here and those who are not here including Senator Duff, Representative Vargas, Senator Looney, Representative Phipps, as I said, Representative Fasano, Representative Perillo, and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. My name is Elease Wright. I am honored to have been nominated by Governor Lamont to serve another term on the Board of Regents for higher education and thank you for allowing me to speak about my continued interest in serving.

I've lived in Connecticut for more than 40 years and was introduced to our state when I left New York to
attend UConn. While I still have family in New York, I chose to remain in Connecticut after I graduated. Hartford became my home where my husband and I chose to raise our two children and to our delight, where we get to see our grandchildren almost daily. I worked at Aetna for a little more than 30 years, half of that time as the Chief Human Resource officer supporting six CEO's.

During my tenure at Aetna I saw significant change as the company evolved from a predominantly commercial insurance company to a world leader in healthcare and benefits. My experience is diverse and has included traditional HR practices such as comp benefits, staffing and employer relations, but in addition, I have significant experience in change management, cultural transformation, employee engagement, financial planning and CEO transitions. My path to the Chief HR officer position wasn’t traditional. I began my professional career as one of the first women who worked at a maximum security men's prison in Connecticut. I've worked for the State Labor Department, served as an instructor in Aetna's Pension Actuarial Department and for a period of my career, I reported to the CFO of Aetna.

I majored in education in college and I understand the power of education and how it can function as a conduit to a successful career. Serving on the Board of Regents has allowed me to apply my experience and knowledge to an environment that is experiencing significant change. It's been a privilege to play a role in supporting affordable and accessible education to our students, 95 percent of whom are from Connecticut and more than 75 percent of those students find employment within our state within nine months. It's also rewarding to
watch the successful advancement of initiatives such as the TAP which is the Transfer and Articulation Policy Program that some mentioned before, which is making it easier for students to transfer seamlessly among our institutions.

As the Connecticut State College and University System evolves, we will continue to experience more change. I believe the change is worthwhile because our students are beneficiaries of the improvement and the State of Connecticut benefits from our successful students. Employers in our state recognize the value of our institutions and we have the opportunity to do even more to ensure that our students are prepared to fill critical jobs within our state. I would like to continue to be a part of supporting these students and building on our successes, and I recognize that our students play a critical role in strengthening Connecticut.

Thank you again for your consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions that you have.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Representative Perillo.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just, and congratulations by the way on your reappointment.

ELEASE E. WRIGHT: Thank you.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Your extensive HR background is actually, in my opinion, is perfectly situated for the Board of Regents. So having done so much hiring at very high levels, what do you think is the gap between what our higher education system in Connecticut is doing right now and its ability to meet the needs of employers here in Connecticut. We
hear often there are jobs but no applicants. What are we missing in your expert opinion?

ELEASE E. WRIGHT: That's a great question and I think that some of the actions that President Ojakian has taken in recent years is putting us on a path to correct that. I think that these — what I've learned in the four years that I've been here, there's some remarkable institutions, those 17 institutions, but we don't always see that the types of programs in those colleges and universities necessarily align with the needs of employers. I was on Governor Lamont's steering committee for the transition team and we heard that over and over again, that there were needs and there students, but those students could not always fill the positions and the open positions that we have in the, you know the employers have in their organizations. The more we partner with private industry, the better we get at identifying what the needs are and some of the challenges that we have as regents, of sitting on the board, it is painful when you see that some of the programs that are offered, there are not a lot, but some of the programs that are offered don’t have enough students that are enrolled in those classes and so you have to bring to conclusion those classes. We do it in a way that those who are enrolled in the programs aren’t going to be affected by it. You allow them to finish out the programs, but yet, to see that some of those programs that may have been very effective many years ago don’t, aren’t necessarily as relevant today and so I think that we have to continue, and when I say us, I think the administration has to continue at all the colleges and universities to review those programs, to determine their relevance, to partner with the
employers to ensure that we're doing the right thing, we're educating our students in the right way. And I think a great example are the advanced manufacturing programs that we have and certainly as Naugatuck who is a leader in that.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Thank you. Interestingly, can you give me an example of a program that's had to be discontinued because there's been a lack of interest?

ELAISE E. WRIGHT: I knew you would ask me. There was one in, I'm trying to which college. It was Northwestern University and I remember that because there were a lot of people who were lobbying to keep it and I know I'm testifying, but this is not the title of the program, but it had something to do with forestry or something, but it was not, they just didn’t have the enrollment so they had to bring it to conclusion.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Now, is that because there wasn't an interest from the students? Just they didn’t enjoy the policy aspects or was there just not a need from the hiring community?

ELAISE E. WRIGHT: I don't believe there was a need and in fact, those students who were lobbying for the program, what they ensured, what the leadership at Northwestern did and certainly the leadership at Central Office did was to ensure that those students could get the training that they need from other programs that had higher enrollments and where there was a better chance of them transferring into a position for that.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Thanks and the reason for my question is I'm wondering if there are programs
where there's just not any student interest, but there's actually a hiring need in the state, if there's that sort of gap?

ELEASE E. WRIGHT:  I can't speak to that, I've never seen that, but I think we have a responsibility to make sure that you educate the students on where the opportunities are and you know from what I've seen, again, it's been a learning, a huge learning curve for me in coming onto the board, but what we've learned is that sometimes the information is there, it's resident with the faculty, it's resident with the administrators.  We have to make sure that we continue to communicate with the students so they are aware of where there are opportunities but when I was on the transition team, the steering committee rather, what I saw, one of the biggest gaps, at least that employers talked about, was in technology so I think that's a huge opportunity for us.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Thank you very much.  I really appreciate it.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  Thank you, Ms. Wright.  So to that point, when you had, on the transition team and you had companies say either United Technologies or Sikorsky's or the Bioscience or STEM, would they have a point person to actually communicate on a regular basis with say UConn or any of the state colleges because to me that would make the most sense?  We have educated folks, but they're not educated to get a job in many cases as far as right into one of these companies and that, I mean that is the reality.
ELEASE E. WRIGHT: Well one of the things that when, when I was at Aetna we did, typically you had different departments who in some cases adopted high schools, sometimes grammar schools and middle schools, or they adopted a college and they had a relationship with them and as David Jimenez said before, oftentimes it's because of an individual in a company. They graduated from that school and so there's a connection there, but just in you know participating in the steering committee and the transition team, what I learned was that a competing company to Aetna, had a really strong relationship with Eastern and was able to accommodate the development and internships of students at that school on the Eastern campus, and over 90 percent of those students got jobs after they graduated with a competing company to Aetna, and while I'm no longer the Chief HR Officer for Aetna, what I did do is call somebody in the staffing area, a senior person in the staffing area and said you need to talk to the president of Eastern because that's a missed opportunity for us. So sometimes it's making those connections and some employers are more aggressive about doing that because of preexisting relationships that they have with individuals or the institutions.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): So in that steering or transition with Governor Lamont, sure with companies like UTC or Stanley Black and Decker or any of these companies, they had to have some representation there so are they willing to really coordinate with our state colleges or our colleges in general because that's the disconnect. It's not at the fault of I don't think of the education system or the company. It's coordination and many times -- my
buddy's son went to school at Bryant College, he was recruited to Aetna. I mean he's got a really good job at Aetna now from a college from another, you know, they have a great relationship with you know Bryant University so my point is I guess, it would be nice to have the relationship. We talk about it and it's just getting that coordination and I know people are busy, but I think it's important for our students and for our education system to have this coordination and the companies and our economy.

ELEASE E. WRIGHT: I absolutely agree with you, I do, and I think that it's a shared relationship. I think companies have a responsibility to look around them, to see, especially if the opportunities are within Connecticut, to figure out where the opportunities are, but it's also the responsibility of the state colleges and universities to make it known, the kinds of programs that they have and in some cases, to do outreach to educate those folks because I can tell you from experience that people who are, whose job it is to fill open positions in some of these public companies would welcome the opportunity of identifying more talent to fill some of their open positions.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Yeah, well, I appreciate what you do and hopefully you know we can continue this, but it's really, we all know it's vitally important to have that communication and that dialogue so thank you so much.

ELEASE E. WRIGHT: Thank you.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): And thank you, Mr. Chair.
REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Representative Yaccarino. Any further questions or comments? Yes, Representative Godfrey, you have the floor.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): Thank you. Congratulations.

ELEASE E. WRIGHT: Thank you.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): Good to see you. Your resume is extremely impressive, good job. I'm glad you're bringing that skill set to the Board of Regents. The State of Connecticut needs all the help we can get and you're there. I think you heard some of my concerns and questions a little earlier with another candidate, and I am concerned particularly about the overreliance on tuition and certainly, when like Representative Yaccarino was just talking about, the need to have that communication between the institutions and the local labor market, the employers, is critical. And one of the reasons I get a little concerned about some of the consolidation talk is that the locals who know the territory and know better than any centralized bureaucracy where the jobs are going to be and what the employers' concerns are so if you just give me some of your thoughts on some of these issues, I'd appreciate it.

ELEASE E. WRIGHT: Well, as one of my colleagues said before, to manage a matrixed relationship where you have to focus on local, but you have to also think about sort of the collective system, it's always a challenge, but for those of us who've worked in corporations, that's kind of a regular challenge that you have every day and it's a tension that exists every day. I think it would be terrible if we lost the location connection because jobs, you
know typically, you fill jobs, you learn about the jobs at the local level.

That said, one of the first observations that I made when I joined the board four years ago was that there was some many more efficiencies that could’ve been gained if we could leverage you know the expertise or the systems that were located at the various colleges and universities. Everyone had a way of, you know, many of the institutions had a way of managing, let's say technology or they had a way of managing HR or purchasing, but yet to have 17 different ways of doing that is not the most effective to run. To have a student who attends Manchester Community college, then wants to go to Gateway, but can't transfer those credits within the system is insane, and to have someone complete a two-year associate's degree and not be able to transfer to any of our State Universities, it shouldn’t happen so we've been able to work with those things.

I think the benefit of having a system is that the movement throughout the system, the efficiencies that you can find within the system, that's a way to reduce costs. We absolutely as a body, as a board do not want to raise tuition. That is something we've said, if students are at the center of everything that we do, and they come first, then we have to figure out better ways and what I mentioned just a few minutes ago are ways that you can reduce those costs, but we recognize that just sort of finding some efficiencies is not the way to get there. I think that the Student First Initiative is one way that we can significantly reduce the cost without compromising the quality of the services and the education that we provide to the students. That
said, it's just, it's taking longer than we had originally anticipated, that was too aggressive a timeframe, but I think that we can get there. But we haven’t solved for all the financial challenges that we have and we're not going to get there by relying on reserves, that's just not going to happen so we have to continue to figure out ways to be more efficient.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): And I understand much of that, this reference to a matrix system is kind of new to me, but we're the original participants in the matrix system. You know I represent a district in a city to the State of Connecticut, I get that part really, really well, but I get concerned, I can see the efficiencies with the central purchasing, data collection and analysis. I get a little nervous when we're talking about human resources. I would prefer you know John Clark to make decisions about hiring rather than some bureaucrat in Hartford, that kind of, that kind of thing gives me pause and, cause, he is a very talkative individual as you know [laughs]. I enjoy like having lunch with him every two or three months just, I just sit there and eat and he talks, it's just a marvelous relationship [laughs], but, I worry about those kinds of things and as I said before, I worry about the issue that Representative Yaccarino brought up of the complaints I hear about too many administrators, not enough faculty members and certainly too many adjunct faculty and not enough full-time faculty so that's my view of things from my experience in Danbury.

ELEASE E. WRIGHT: Well I appreciate those comments and I can say when you talk about sort of finding efficiencies and leveraging resources across a
system, and as it relates to human resources, that never means that you know you have a bureaucratic system where at the central office, those local decisions should be made. I'm a believer in any organization that the local supervisor should be making the decision about HR issues. What I do think is effective, if you have common policies and programs and if they are administered consistently across all organizations, that's where I think you can find the benefits, you can learn, you can look at best practice and you can learn from one another. Never meant you know to convey that you take the decision making away from the local level.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): I appreciate hearing that. Thank you very much. Good luck.

ELEASE E. WRIGHT: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Representative Godfrey. Representative Phipps.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): I said I know I'm going to sound like a broken record but --

ELEASE E. WRIGHT: That's okay.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): I am super passionate about this issue, the number 149 keeps coming up and again, that's the number of hours it would take if you are in a minimum wage job to pay for those classes at the community college. Just once again, looking for partners and support as we think about how do we help some of more vulnerable students, help our nontraditional students be on a path to enrichment and to financial security, but also into a lifelong career so I would love your support in helping and in making those changes.
ELEASE E. WRIGHT: Well I think I can give you some encouragement. The, there, the federal laws don’t allow for non-credited courses to receive Pell grants; however, what I learned recently is that we are lobbying, when I saw we, the administration under President Ojakian, is lobbying to make an exception to that. So there is a recognition that that is a hardship for those students who want to you know sort of get accredited and certified in doing certain -- like an EMT and certain other things, so we're trying to figure out a way that we can work through that. No definitive answer now, but I did want to make you aware that they are pushing very hard to find a way that we can allow those students to be recipients of Pell grants.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Yeah, as a matter of fact, I was there on the, at the testimony, I think it was on Thursday. I'm a co-signer of that bill as we're finding ways to make sure that college is debt-free for all of our Connecticut residents. I'm a major supporter of that bill and I appreciate the work and thought as we -- what's going to make our state more equitable. Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Representative Phipps. Any other member of the Committee wishing to speak or ask any questions. If not, I want to add my congratulations.

ELEASE E. WRIGHT: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Your reputation precedes you. It seems like this is the day when we have a lot reappointments today, Board of Regents, all people returning and returning for a reason. Obviously Governor Lamont recognizes that you're doing a great job. I remember meeting you way back either in the
late 70's or early 80's when you were working at the Labor Department and I was a leader in the Hartford Federation of Teachers. It's interesting to see that both you and the previous nominee, Attorney Jimenez both have that kind of human resources, labor management type of background that I'm familiar with and that I think adds a strong dimension to all the public policy discussions. It's a unique position and a unique perch in management when you deal with human resources issues and also, I also want to congratulate you, not only for your voluntary service on this board, but also for all the things you do for the great Hartford community, all the involvement with non-profits and community organizations like the Young Women's Christian Association so I want to add my congratulations and I know I speak on behalf of all the Committee members, those that are here and those that aren't here, when I say that we're very fortunate and as a Hartford Rep, I'm particularly proud of the fact that you're a Hartford resident and --

ELISE E. WRIGHT:  Have been for a long, long time.

REP. VARGAS (6TH):  That's correct so I think without further ado, there is the final question we ask of all our nominees which is, is there anything in your past that would prove embarrassing to this Committee, to the Governor or to the State of Connecticut?

ELISE E. WRIGHT:  No.

REP. VARGAS (6TH):  Well thank you very much for your testimony and that brings us to the final nominee, Dr. Peter M. Rosa of Avon, Connecticut to the member of the Board of Regents for Higher
Education. Will you please raise your right hand? Do you promise to tell the truth and nothing but the truth?

PETER M. ROSA: I do.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Please be seated. In full disclosure, I've known this gentleman for over 40 years. We've been good friends out in the trenches when he was leading [inaudible - 02:34:09] and many other organizations, when he was on the city council of the City of New Britain. It's hard to see you as an Avon guy when I've known you as a New Britain guy for so long, but I know the great work that you did with the foundation at Central Connecticut State University where my wife studied under that community program, and well it's just good to have you here in front of our Committee and the floor is yours.

PETER M. ROSA: Thank you, Representative Vargas and good afternoon members of the Committee. My name is Pete Rosa and I'm from Avon. Thank you for having me today. It is my honor to have been re-nominated by Governor Ned Lamont for the Board of Regents for Higher Education, and I am grateful for the opportunity to tell you about myself.

Most recently, I was a community investments officer or program officer with the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. Prior to that, I served in various higher education capacities at Central Connecticut State University, the Department of Higher Education, the Connecticut State University System, and the University of Connecticut. In some regards, as the newest regent, I'm still on a steep learning curve, having been originally appointed just this
past December, but in other regards, I'm not totally a novice.

In 2005, I was appointed by Governor Jodi Rell to one of the regents' predecessor boards, the Board of Trustees for the Connecticut State University System, and I served in that capacity until 2011 when higher education was restructured. I also had the opportunity to serve on the Regional Advisory Committee Board for Tunxis Community College so I bring a long and continued commitment to public higher education especially for the cause of higher educational access.

If confirmed, I will devote myself to this cause as well as the cause of academic excellence for the benefit of our students attending the state universities and community colleges. I appreciate the fact that our students by and large stay in Connecticut upon graduation. They become a major segment of the state's workforce and economic infrastructure and ultimately, they end up paying the state back through their taxes and its investment in their education. To this end, I pledge to serving them and the taxpayers of Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration and I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Dr. Rosa. At this point, I'll open up the hearing for committee members. Yes, our house ranking member, Representative Perillo, you have the floor.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Good afternoon and thank you for being here. I'm just interested to hear how long you’ve been a friend of the Chair of the Committee and I will try not to hold that against you [laughter]. Actually, I'll ask the same
question I asked the last individual which is, you've been in education for a very long time and obviously, always trying to make sure that what you're offering students is what's needed in an employment environment. How do you balance that, how do manage it? You know I went to a University and I chose the business school within the University as an undergrad. Many of my friends chose the College of Arts and Sciences. I know that I came out of school fully prepared and had a job before I left in accounting. I know some of my colleagues did not. How do you ensure that even though there are a lot of offerings and majors within the liberal arts, that folks come out prepared for a job that's actually going to earn them a paycheck and get them out of their parents' basement?

PETER M. ROSA: Yes, very good point to make. Each of our institutions, both the State Universities and the community college have relationships with business advisor councils representing business and industry. Not all of them are seeking people with specific skills such as accounting, you know I have a grandson who's just got accepted to UConn in accounting and he knows what he wants and what he's going to do. I also have a granddaughter who's graduating this year from Central Connecticut and she was a liberal arts major. She already has a job with Hartford Healthcare and she got that through internships and through talking to her professors and making herself available and again, she's a liberal arts major and she already has a job with Hartford Healthcare and now, she's toying with the notion of going full time in Hartford Healthcare and maybe finding some time to pursue a graduate degree
at UConn. I think using those contacts through the regional advisory councils is quite important and it's imperative for the institution and for the faculty and the leaders to make those contacts and make the availability paramount for their students.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): And you said that was your granddaughter.

PETER M. ROSA: My granddaughter, yes.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Add to the gentleman's resume, a very proud grandfather

PETER M. ROSA: Yes.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): That's it. That ends my question. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

PETER M. ROSA: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Representative Perillo. No questions? Well then if there are no further questions, I want to congratulate you again on behalf of all the committee for your appointment to the Board of Regents for Higher Education and I'll ask you the same question we ask of all the nominees. Do you believe there is anything in your past that might prove embarrassing to this Committee, to the Governor or to the State of Connecticut?

PETER M. ROSA: No.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well thank you very much and that concludes the presentations by all our nominees. At this point, I'll ask, Madam Clerk, is there anybody who signed up from the public to speak. Thank you very much, Dr. Rosa. No? And any written communications that we know of? No? Okay,
if there's no written communications then we'll proceed, let's proceed with the business portion of the meeting as well here. Yes, we'll need a Senator for the first one, for Timothy Larson. We'll take a couple of minutes, put the committee at ease until we see if we can locate a Senator.

Okay, Madam Clerk, we're ready for the, to take action of the resolutions so we hereby close the public hearing and open the business portion of the meeting and as I said earlier, we'll keep the votes open until 4 p.m. Our first Resolution is a Resolution that nominates Timothy Larson of East Hartford to be Executive Director of the Office of Higher Education. Do I have a motion? All right it's been properly by Senator Duff and seconded by Senator Moore or the other way around. Senator Moore made the motion. It was seconded by Senator Duff. Will Madam Clerk please take the roll?

CLERK: Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Pass. [laughter]

CLERK: Ha-ha. I don’t think we're on CTN today. Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yes.

CLERK: Mooney, Fasano, Bergstein, Formica, Hartley, Kushner, Moore, Witkos.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay. We'll announce over the PA system that the votes will be held open until 4 p.m. for those Senators who couldn’t make the meeting. The next is a Senate Joint Resolution confirming David Jimenez of Hartford to be a member of the Board of Regents for Higher education. Is there a motion? It's been moved by Representative
Phipps. Is there a second? Seconded by Senator Moore. Will Madam Clerk please take the roll?

CLERK: Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yep.

CLERK: Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Yes.

CLERK: Looney, Phipps.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Yes.

CLERK: Fasano, Perillo.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Yes.

CLERK: Bergstein, D'Agostino, Davis, DiMassa, Formica, Godfrey.

SENATOR GODFREY (110TH): Yes.

CLERK: Hartley, Kushner, Moore.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Yes.

CLERK: Verrengia, Witkos.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Yes.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): The third Resolution is confirming Elease Wright of Hartford to be a member of the Board of Regents for Higher Education. This is a House Joint Resolution so all members of the Committee can vote on this. Is there a motion? It's been moved by Senator Duff and seconded by Representative Perillo. Will Madam Clerk please take the roll?

CLERK: Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yes.
March 5, 2019

EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Yes.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Yes.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Yes.

SENATOR GODFREY (110TH): Yes.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Yes.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Yes.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Madam Clerk and now we proceed to the last, final, fourth and final nominee, Dr. Peter M. Rosa of Avon to be a member of the Board of Regents for Higher Education. Do I have a motion? It's been properly moved by Representative Perillo and seconded by Representative Godfrey. Madam Clerk, will you please proceed with the roll call?

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Yes.

CLERK: Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yes.

CLERK: Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Yes.
REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Yes.

CLERK: Fasano, Perillo.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Yes.

CLERK: Bergstein, D'Agostino, Davis, DiMassa, Formica, Godfrey.

SENATOR GODFREY (110TH): Yes.

CLERK: Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Yes.

CLERK: Kushner, Moore.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Yes.

CLERK: Verrengia, Witkos, Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Yes.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Madam Clerk, and that concludes our business and the meeting is I guess what you call it recessed until 4 o'clock.