



Senator Fonfara, Representative Rojas, Representative Davis, Senator Witkos, and members of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee.

My name is Michael Bailey and I am the Executive Director with the UConn Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and we oppose S.B. 1130 – An Act Concerning Entrepreneurship Initiatives at the University of Connecticut.

The bill as written, completely shifts the object and focus of the university from a space dedicated to educating an informed and engaged citizenry, fostering a critical thinking workforce, and inspiring social and responsible community members to nearly an apprentice school for future entrepreneurs. Although entrepreneurship is important, to make UConn’s sole object training future entrepreneurs runs counter to the philosophical mission of universities generally and certainly the University of Connecticut.

In addition to the philosophical departure this bill represents, business leaders have stated very clearly they want well-rounded employees who can solve complex problems.¹ They want employees with skills central to the liberal arts. For instance, all businesses need good writers and communicators.² Students majoring in English, Philosophy, and Sociology typically read and write in a more engaged and purposeful way. These majors, which already exist at UConn, teach students how to relate and understand people – traits essential for business and professional development. Most importantly, the humanities and social sciences demand creativity; the kind of creativity that science, technology, finance, and economics require for innovation and out of the box thinking³. Inherent in entrepreneurship is creativity, a creativity fostered in classrooms at UConn today. While the focus of entrepreneurship in this bill is well intentioned, it misses the creativity and skill development already taking place at UConn.

Finally, UConn has been engaged in serious entrepreneurship efforts over the years so that any radical redirection of the objective and mission of the university is unnecessary. UConn is home to the Entrepreneurship And Innovation Consortium who’s mission is to...

“It serves to foster entrepreneurship and innovation by inspiring and promoting ideas, connecting resources, and building awareness throughout the university and external community. Members of the consortium provide essential services supporting entrepreneurship including programs, activities, funding, courses, mentoring, and education. UConn offers students a wide range of courses to help them engage in entrepreneurship at different levels including foundational, advanced, and experiential. Students can pursue their interests through joint degrees, majors, or creating their own curricula. Ideas

¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/06/why-americas-business-majors-are-in-desperate-need-of-a-liberal-arts-education/489209/>

² <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/277828>

³ *Id.*

are also encouraged outside the classroom through numerous programs and activities as well as in makerspaces and creation spaces across campus, designed to encourage exploration and innovation.”⁴ UConn has successfully developed numerous start-ups that have contributed to the state and national economy. This evidences the fact that UConn is already doing entrepreneurship without a legislative mandate. In the spirit of the free market principles of entrepreneurship, let UConn students and faculty innovate on their own.

For these reasons, UConn-AAUP opposes SB 536 but stands ready to partner with this committee to ensure UConn remains a place of innovation and applied education.

⁴ <https://entrepreneurship.uconn.edu/welcome/>