Written Testimony for the Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee

Regarding: SB 817

AN ACT CONCERNING HIGHER EDUCATION

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Respectfully submitted by:

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I am writing to support SB 817, An Act Concerning Higher Education, which will provide a thoughtful, well researched, and independent study of higher education in the state.

We need a study like this desperately.

I am especially worried about the health and viability of our state’s community colleges, which appear to be under attack by the system office and the BOR. Especially worrisome to me are consolidation efforts, especially the “Students First” proposal, which is nothing less than a radical restructuring of higher education in the state.

Consolidation will damage our state’s community colleges, which have been an engine of prosperity, hope, and opportunity in Connecticut now for decades.

We have to find ways to make community colleges stronger, not strip them of their leadership and autonomy.

While I understand that there are fiscal concerns we need to address, I think there are many ways we might address these challenges that will create less disruption and be far less damaging to community college students and community colleges in the state.
I believe that your proposed study will provide precisely the kind of forward-looking, research-based leadership we desperately need.

This is an important moment in the history of higher education in Connecticut.

I would like to publicly thank you taking the initiative to provide leadership on this incredibly important issue at this important moment.

Respectfully submitted,

--Patrick Sullivan