

February 27, 2020

TO: Chairs of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:
Sen. Will Haskill and Representative Gregory Haddad

FROM: The Community College Roundtable

We write today to urge passage of three bills before the Committee today:

RB 5113 – AA Requiring Legislative Approval for the Merger or Closing of Institutions Within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities

RB 5114 – AA Requiring Training for the Members of the Governing Boards of Institutions of Higher Education in the State

RB 1116 – AA Concerning Higher Education

All relate to the administration of the Connecticut Community Colleges by the Board of Regents for Higher Education. RB 5113 would require legislative approval for any merger or closure of an institution proposed by the Board of Regents; RB 5114 would require an education/training program for every appointee to the Board of Regents; and RB 5116 would require the Office for Higher Education to study issues related to higher education.

With all due respect, after eight years of Regents' leadership for the Community Colleges, the failure of 5 presidents selected by the Regents, repeated unproductive proposals for reorganization and savings by the Regents, the latest of which is being implemented with no assurance of continued accreditation, ongoing increases to costs at the Regents' office, and declining enrollments at the colleges, one must ask why legislative oversight, the expertise of regents, and the role of the office of higher education have not already been called into question, examined, and addressed through increased oversight by the General Assembly.

We write today to encourage approval of each of these bills in the belief that doing something, indeed anything, is the responsibility of the General Assembly in order to stop the failures, the unproductive schemes, and cost increases in order to preserve access to public higher education in Connecticut for the state's neediest and most disadvantaged students. We also wonder if the Office of Higher Education has not been studying issues related to higher education, what have they been doing?

As advocates for community colleges and their students, we have been asking the General Assembly for action on these matters since 2012 when the Regents were created to manage a hostile takeover of higher education at the behest of Governor Malloy and his chief of staff, the current system president.

As a current presidential candidate might say, "C'mon man; do something."