

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-104

AN ACT REQUIRING FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY OF THE STUDENTS

Title: FIRST PLAN.

Vote Date: 3/3/2020

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/27/2020

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill seeks to create transparency in the implementation of the Board of Regents for Higher Education's Students First plan, by ways such as publicly posting on ct.edu financial reports of expenses and savings realized through the plan, reporting the transfer of employment positions and the creation of new employment positions, reporting consulting and service contracts, and reporting a list of funds or employment positions transferred to the central office of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Mark Ojakian, President, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities](#): President Ojakian writes that the Committee should take no action on this bill because CSCU already provides detailed savings and expenses reports as well as long-term projections to the Connecticut General Assembly, NECHE, and the Board of Regents. He notes that Public Act 19-117 already requires CSCU to submit detailed financial reports to the Higher Education Consolidation Committee and Higher Education Committee.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Patty O'Neill, Associate Professor of Psychology, Western Connecticut State University](#): Dr. O'Neill submitted testimony in support of the bill. She argues that while the Students First plan promises to save millions of dollars annually, improve graduation and retention rates, increase enrollment, and close the racial achievement gap, none of the promises have been realized in the implementation of the plan thus far. She also argues that

the plan has weakened the colleges and universities by diverting funds from individual institutions to the central office of the CSCU system and has failed to replace positions left empty by the borrowing of faculty to work at the central office.

Multiple speakers expressed support for this bill because they are skeptical of the BOR's claim from a February 2020 meeting to have saved \$11 million thus far from the implementation of the Students First plan because those savings stem largely from attrition of faculty and staff positions and are not direct savings from the Students First plan. They also are concerned about the unknown contract costs of several consultant firms that have been hired to help with the planning the Students First plan. They believe this bill would help with the financial transparency of the Students First consolidation plan:

- [Stephen Adair, Professor of Sociology, Central Connecticut State University](#)
- [Maureen Chalmers, President, Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges](#)
- [Lillian Maisfehl, Librarian, Gateway Community College](#)
- [Lauren Doninger, Professor of Psychology, Gateway Community College](#)

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Amy Dowell, Connecticut State Director, Education Reform Now Connecticut](#): Ms. Dowell submitted testimony in opposition to the bill. She argues that this bill requiring the Board of Regents of Higher Education to post quarterly financial reports on the Students First consolidation plan would slow down the plan's progress with unnecessary red tape and impede students' access to educational opportunities that will be realized with the implementation of the plan.

See also response from administration/agency.

Reported by: Justin Boutin, Assistant Clerk

Date: March 4, 2020