

## ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE

## PUBLIC HEARING

CHAIRPERSON: Senator Will Haskell,  
Representative Gregory  
Haddad

SENATORS: Flexor, Haskell, Hwang,  
Maroney, Slap

REPRESENTATIVES: Ackert, Arora, Betts,  
Doucette, Green, Haddad,  
Hall, Mushinsky, Rochelle,  
Sanchez, Smith,  
Sredzinski, Stallworth,  
Turco, Wood, Ziogas

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Public Hearing to order. We have four bills on our agenda for today, and a number of people signed up. The first person to speak on the Legislators, Agency, and Municipal Officials list is Mark Ojakian from the CSCU system.

MARK OJAKIAN: Good morning.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Sometimes we don't get to choose the room we want, and so now you seem so far away from all of us.

MARK OJAKIAN: I don't know if that's good or bad, Representative, but I will follow the direction on the sign in front of me and state my name for the record. I am Mark Ojakian, President of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, and joining me at the table here today is Ben Barnes, who is the CFO of the system, and I have folks from my team in the audience, should the need arise. But I want to thank you this morning for giving me the

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opportunity to testify on a few bills. You have my written testimony, so I'm not going to repeat it. I'll just make a few highlighted comments as it relates to the testimony and then, as always, make myself available for your questions.

I'm here first of all to talk about House Bill 5113 which would require legislative approval for mergers and closures of institutions. I first want to reiterate that CSU is not closing any campuses or satellites. I think that's an important part of this conversation to have. I made a commitment that all of the locations that currently exist would remain in existence to help serve all of the students who have need to go to their sort of home campus. No part of the initiative known as Students First calls for the closure or scaling back of any Connecticut community college campuses. My reason in testifying once again in opposition to this proposal is for a couple of main reasons.

First of all, I think the statutes currently give the Governing Board for CSU the ability to examine the long-term viability of institutions within its system to make decisions regarding academic programs in terms of initiating or closing or reducing the numbers of programs, and I think as the fiduciary over the 17 institutions in the system and the 12 community colleges, that role is vested with the Board of Regents. It's similar to the authority that's vested in the Board of Trustees at the University of Connecticut. The members of the Board, as you know, are appointed by the governor and by legislative leaders. There is a process in place where when appointments are announced there is a hearing in front of Legislative and Executive

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Nominations, and both chambers of the legislature take up and approve those nominations. So, there's a process in place if folks in the legislature or others have concerns about the appointments to the Board to have an opportunity to express those opinions.

Secondly, I would also point out to you that our accreditors, NECHE, the New England Commission on Higher Education, has been very clear that the governance standard 3.4 requires sufficient independence for governing boards from outside influence. As a matter of fact, Barbara Britt Ingham, the president of that organization testified on March 19 that there needed to be -- the autonomy that boards currently have that needed to be continued in order for institutions in order for institutions to be able to thrive and adapt to the 21st century. So, I believe it's vital that any process be governed by the Board of Regents and by the New England Commission of Higher Education rather than creating a political process which may or may not be intended to not only slow down but to obstruct what we are trying to do. So, I would urge you to take no action on that piece of legislation.

Senate Bill 104 would require, once again, CSU to post on our website a variety of information detailing savings and expenses related to the implementation of Students First. I would argue, and some would disagree with me, but I would argue that this has been a highly transparent and participatory process. We have provided detailed reports outlining savings, expenses, and long-term projections to the full General Assembly, to the Appropriations Committee, to the Subcommittee as

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part of the budgeting process, to our accreditors, to the Board of Regents, and we've shared with our employees through regular email communications.

I would also say that we have responded to every Freedom of Information request we've received from the public and others. We have appeared before, and I'm sure we will continue to appear before, the Higher Education Consolidation Committee with reams of information that we have provided as to not only the need to move this initiative forward but also the real validated savings projections that are associated with this effort. We had a transparency bill that passed last year, we've complied with those provisions, and, so, I would urge you also to take no action on this piece of legislation since I don't believe we need a new transparency bill every year in order to be transparent.

And then just two quick comments on the other 2 bills, 5114 mandates training for members of governing boards for public and private higher education institutions. We see value in training of board members as an important component of our state responsibility, and we provide comprehensive in-house training for all regents following their legislative confirmation. Our accreditors NECHE also outlines specific standards that board members must adhere to, to be considered fiduciaries of governing boards. I believe this is an important topic, and I'm looking forward to working with you on crafting language that I think would be reasonable for volunteer members of boards.

And then, lastly, 5112 would require the Board of Regents to include the central office System Office

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in the itemization of our budget request to OPM. I think as we testified in Appropriations, we have a little bit of a different cycle than most state agencies in that when we submit our budget proposal to OPM in the early fall, we still don't understand the impact that the fall enrollments are going to have on our budget projections, as we usually don't get consensus numbers until, I think, the end of September or the beginning of October at some point, and then again in the spring, we have the same issue. So, as we look at crafting budgets for both the constituent units and for the System Office, we present the best information available at the time to our Board, to the Office of Policy and Management, and then understand that the Board needs to adjust those spending plans and priorities based on the fiscal conditions that we encounter during the year. If there are hold-backs from the Governor's Office, then we need to adjust the budget. If enrollment is not as robust as we thought, we need to adjust the budget. So, we're happy to have this conversation, but I just want folks to understand that, you know, there may be some short-term challenges associated with this, but I'm not here to oppose the bill.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you very much for your testimony. Four bills, four opinions; that's good. I'm going to start on 5114. I'm sure we'll have time at some point to do a side-by-side comparison of the training that you already provide with your in-house orientation session with the specific list that's listed in the legislation 5114, which is modeled after legislation that was passed in Virginia for public institutions. But I'm just

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curious to know if you see anything in the language now that you think would be especially problematic or not, you know, where you wouldn't already be in compliance with the language that we proposed to put into statute.

MARK OJAKIAN: I think, Representative, not having the full list in front of me, but I could look it up in the bill in my older, I think many of the items that are included in that list we currently provide training to Board members. I would also indicate that our Board is structure very much along the lines of a committee process, and, so, individuals who serve on, for example, the Finance and Infrastructure Committee are fully immersed in tuition and fee setting policy. They understand the capital needs of the system and what it means in terms of bonding and other, you know, other capital needs that might come before us. Just as an aside, the bill as I read it was a little confusing only because I didn't know sort of the statutory language. Going back to my legislative research days, the statutory language talked about programs, and you had to do one program, but it's the list of program, and, so, I just would like to have a conversation to be able to clarify what the intent is and to be able to balance the needs for training, which I agree with, with also the time commitment that Board members currently need to commit to in order to serve on a Board. It's an important public service function, and I think folks need to be trained. I just want to make sure that our thoughts are aligned.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Yeah, I mean I agree with you, but I would just note, as well, that when you

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testify against 5113 and you talk about the breadth of the responsibility that we've delegated to the Board of Regents which includes adoption of its own budget, adoption of tuition rates, determination about how many institutions and where they are, you know all of those things are delegated to this board. I'm sure there are other examples in state government where we similarly delegated that level of responsibility to folks outside of the legislative and really independent of the executive branch, as well, to a large extent, but I can't think of many where we've given that level of autonomy to the organization.

I would also just point out that, you know, this legislation, although there is a slightly different set of responsibilities given to train folks who serve on the boards of independent colleges, this bill would also require independent colleges and universities to do similar training with their boards. That idea comes out of legislation that passed recently in Massachusetts and really is sort of trying to get ahead of this trend that we see coming where, you know, in the last five years, I'm told that there're 12 closures or consolidations of private institutions in Massachusetts. They struggled a lot with how they should regular independent colleges and institutions there to make sure that students were being well supported and that as colleges and universities face, you know, an uncertain future given the enrollment decline that's happening across the country that we're just making sure that we're putting those institutions in the best position possible to weather that storm. And,

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so, requiring training of their boards was one of the facets that was included in Massachusetts.

So moving on to 5113, you know, this is a familiar piece of legislation. It has been proposed, I don't know if it's the last two or three years, but I think that one of the concerns that I hear from members of the General Assembly is really a basic question about how we delegated too much. When we as a legislature provide funding to the system, you know, I don't think it would surprise anybody that there's an expectation that that system will remain recognizable moving forward from year to year. I think the primary concern here is closure of campuses. I appreciate that you have worked very hard and have never indicated that that would ever be a priority or a viable option for the Board of Regents to close a campus. I think that that is the primary, I think, motivation here.

But I also think that as we move from to a single institution model certainly there would be something lost in the form of local control over what is now an independent community college, and I guess I just wanted to ask you about that. I mean, so you see any potential downside or can we at least agree to recognize that, you know, when you move to a single model for a single institution, that would take out of the hands of folks who are more directed towards meeting local concerns, the local business community through local programming, and that that might, in fact, make that more difficult with a single institution model.

MARK OJAKIAN: So, just two points to address your comments. First of all, in terms of being

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recognizable. I would argue that the model we currently have is to meet the needs of students from the 20th century and that what we're trying to do is to be student-ready college and colleges for the 21st century, that we need to meet the needs of the students where they go to school as opposed to them having to meet our needs and shape their educational experience around us. So, that's number one.

Number two, I would argue that streamlining administration and having service-level agreements around shared services in administrative areas actually frees up people on the campus to do more of what you just referenced -- more to connect with the community and more to be able to interact with their workforce, development boards, and their local employers to adapt programs and curriculum to meet their needs. There'll be more student-facing individuals on those campuses to be able to scale, sort of best practices around retention, enrollment, and completion. So, I don't view integrating administration in from 12 institutions into one as diminishing local control or local ability to interact with the community. I actually see it as quite the opposite.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): So, maybe I'll just ask you to expand on this a little bit because right now we have a program catalogue, as I understand it, of somewhere around 450 different degree programs that exist across the 12 independent institutions. I know that you're underway with a process to sort of reduce that program catalogue down to something that is more manageable for a single institution, and this is, of course, what would allow the degree program to be the same at an institution in

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Danielson as it is in Hartford. My guess is that much of that work is low-hanging fruit -- that an English program in Danielson might not be so dramatically different than an English program as it's currently established with the course curriculum and the syllabus in Hartford. But it seems to me that there's also probably local associate's degree programs or certificate programs that are offered at individual campuses that are, in fact, very specifically tailored to a local employer or the local job market. And, so, maybe you'll just talk a little bit about how you balance, you know, the uniformity that's required across 12 campuses with how you also accommodate the special needs of a local community.

MARK OJAKIAN: Absolutely, Representative, and I think you can do both, and that's what we're in the process of doing. I think you can align curriculum and programs in areas that make sense, as you just referred to. And I'm just going to give you sort of an example of what this might look like in the future. Wouldn't it be nice if you could -- you wanted to enroll in Criminal Justice, for example? Wouldn't it be nice to be able to take a common general education core at any campus, understand and take the prerequisites for higher-level courses and identify a specialization and coursework beyond the common degree program if you are interested? So prerequisites could be the same, and then if you decide you're going into probation and parole or you want to go into a different form of criminal justice, you could do that.

The second thing I will say is there is nothing that's been proposed or will be proposed that

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eliminates specialized programs. You know, I hear this all of the time. I heard earlier this week that because of this there's going to be a specialized paralegal program at one of the community colleges that will be eliminated. That couldn't be further from the truth. What I'm suggesting is we may want to open up those specialized programs to other campuses to be able to take advantage seamlessly of those programs.

I'm going to give you one other example because I think -- I like to deal in examples, real-life things that happen. And that is recently I heard from a student, which I often do, who is looking to complete his degree in a STEM field at one of our colleges. He needed only one class, differential equations, to graduate, but it was not offered on his campus that semester. Rather than waiting, he attempted to enrol in the same course on a different community college campus within the system. In order to be able to move into his differential equation course on his home campus, he had to complete calculus II; however, the second college had a prerequisite of calculus III. The student was told he was ineligible to take the course and finish the program. How is that helpful to student success?

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. That's a provocative question and a good one.

MARK OJAKIAN: That's what I think about all the time [Crosstalk].

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Have you run across programs that are currently offered at the current 12 community college institutions that have special

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accreditation where that might actually be grandfathered in because now they don't offer accreditation for a two-year program and that's [Crosstalk]. I didn't know if there were programs that might be at risk as you move from this institution to like essentially a different institution?

MARK OJAKIAN: No. If you have a specialized program that has some sort of regional or national accreditation, and I can think of one that's at Manchester Community College -- it's a specialized program in music education that's nationally accredited and nationally renowned -- that program will stay in place.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thanks for your answer. I think we might hear testimony later that says that some folks are concerned about those things, and, so, maybe we'll listen to that testimony, and I know that you'll have folks in the room who can follow up on those specific incidences.

MARK OJAKIAN: Yeah, I, you know, Representative, I'm always happy to answer comments or questions and concerns. I know it's a very, you know, difficult subject. I would just encourage us all to, you know, have the conversation based on the facts.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): And I'm got a couple more questions about 5112, but I'm going to see if other folks here also have questions that they want to ask first before I keep going on, and, so, I'll ask other committee members if there is anybody else who has a question for Mr. Ojakian. Representative Hall.

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REP. HALL (59TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a quick comment and then just a couple of quick questions. So, I apologize. There are a couple of members that actually thought this hearing was at noon, so we're hoping that, you know, we'll ask our questions. Hopefully they're here to ask theirs, so I would respectfully ask Mr. Ojakian to maybe stick around just a little bit after maybe you're done in your original testimony for a couple members to pop in.

So, first in regarding the bill for transparency. Can you elaborate a little bit more on why you would be against this particular piece of legislation? So, specifically, is it just solely based on that we had one bill last year that addressed some transparency? What is it about this bill that you're not happy with?

MARK OJAKIAN: I think, Representative, what I would argue is we have been probably more transparent than most in this process, and through the legislative process whether it's the Appropriations Committee or you have a committee on consolidations that we've appeared before a couple of times. We provide regular updates to our campus community and on our website about the things that are going on in terms of curriculum alignment or budget savings and those kinds of things. It's probably a philosophical policy difference about sort of micromanaging the operations of an organization. You know, we were able to comply last year, and we've complied with whatever you've asked us to comply with. I don't know if that's the best use of the resources we currently have that are dedicated to, you know, all

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of our campuses and all of our students. So, it's probably just a philosophical difference.

REP. HALL (59TH): Okay, all right. Thank you for that. And then as far as the oversight from the legislators, honestly, is that -- you really think that would be a hindrance to your whole operation? And I have to agree with the good Representative Haddad that spoke earlier. I mean, the question really comes to did we give away too much control, and I think some of the bills we see in front of us speak to the feeling that maybe that did happen.

So, for example, the budgetary items for the administrative offices. So, there's -- and I understand the block grant, and you're perfectly entitled to spend the money according to how you feel to spend it. But if you look at the budget the way it's set up, I'm having a hard time understanding why those items couldn't be broken down quite simply. And we understand that there are changes in budgets every year. We live with it at the local level. All our governing bodies live with it -- boards of education, town municipalities. So, we understand how the dollars shift and move, but it's not like quicksand. Not every single piece in the puzzle moves that quickly. I think your structure for your budgets and line items are mostly very consistent, and there would be shifts, you know, to some items, but it wouldn't be to the point where I don't think a line item for the main office would be totally torn apart with the different changes in amounts.

So, I'm just struggling with why that would be so difficult to do because if you bring it down to the

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local levels, all our local boards of education are funded with block grants, you could say, in the State of Connecticut. However, they manage to do line item budgets for their financial boards or councils that break those numbers down to finite line items. So, I don't think -- in my humble opinion, I don't think we're trying to control how the dollars are spent; however, trying to see what you are trying to accomplish and what your arguments have been to us that you're trying to make this work and make it work efficiently. So, I think, for me, I can speak personally, it's just a matter of transparency, if you will, to kind of bolster your argument that we are saving the state money by this whole plan.

MARK OJAKIAN: So, just a couple of points, Representative, and then thank you for those questions and comments. First of all, I'm not here to oppose that piece of legislation. What I was indicating were some of the challenges we have in understanding our budgetary needs in the same timeframe as other state agencies because of when we enrol students and when we know what those enrollment numbers will yield in terms of revenue and just recognizing that the Board of Regents currently has to adjust budgets for institutions as well as the system based on those fluctuations during the year. So, I'm happy to continue the conversation on this. I hope I didn't give you the sense that I was opposing this one.

On the merger and consolidation bill, I continue to believe that Boards of Trustees or Boards of Regents, you know, have a governing and fiduciary responsibility. It's widely known in the governing

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board world of the United States both at public and private institutions. And if the legislature elects to be the body that approves these kinds of things, I think not only will it inject politics into a situation that should not be political at all. I'm fond of saying I've been around this building for many, many years, and I've seen where, in fact, that has happened to the detriment of certain constituencies, and I would not like to see that happen for the students that we collectively serve.

So, I continue to believe that when the Board was created in, you know, 2011, there were models that were considered, and the legislature negotiated with the administration to come up with a set of responsibilities for the Board of Regents. So, once again, it's a philosophical but also a practical political argument that I am making. Because any bold initiative that is meant to serve the citizens of the state better and the students that we serve better but could get sort of sidetracked because of political interests of different constituencies and political interests in the building, I don't think serves anybody well.

We have never argued that oversight's not important. I believe oversight is critical. It's the reason that we have appeared before the Consolidation Committee on a couple of occasions and have been responsive to every legislator who wanted information. We've been responsible to every body that has sought our comments and the data that we have. Everything is on our website. You want to see our financial analysis? You know, you go to the website. So, it's a philosophical argument that I have with sort of diluting the authority of boards,

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of governing boards to actually carry out their fiduciary responsibility.

REP. HALL (59TH): Thank you for that. I appreciate your answers, and I certainly can agree. You've been wonderful with any sort of requested information; your whole staff has. So, I thank you for that. I may have some other questions, but I'm going to let some other members ask. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you, Representative Hall. Next we'll go to Representative Arora.

REP. ARORA (151ST): Thank you, Chair Haskell. Thank you, President Ojakian for being here. I really appreciate what you're accomplishing in consolidating all the institutions together, and I understand from looking at other contexts of organizations as well as businesses that that is a very difficult task. It has its challenges, and it has huge benefits if done right. So, in starting, I really want to emphasize that what you're doing is something which is going to be extremely important for our students, and I truly appreciate that.

My questions to you are, number one, as a result of this consolidation as well as the overall process you are undergoing now, you have been able to reduce the cost basis or the budget or realize what we call economies of scale. Would you like to comment on how significant or how much they are and how much more are going to be coming.

MARK OJAKIAN: Certainly, and thank you for those questions, Representative. As I testified in the Appropriations Committee, this current fiscal year,

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we are on target to achieve close to \$11 million dollars in net savings as a result of our consolidation effort. And next year, we're projected to be around \$16 million dollars in our consolidation effort. This is through attrition and with no other workforce reduction in place. Those are real numbers. We have real analysis behind it if anybody would like to see them.

REP. ARORA (151ST): Can you remind us of the overall budget?

MARK OJAKIAN: The overall budget for the community colleges of general fund dollars is; I think the total budget is --

REP. ARORA (151ST): So, you're saving two to three percent, which is each year, and are these additional every year?

MARK OJAKIAN: Correct. And before we're fully integrated into one college. When we get to the point in 2023 when we're a single accredited institution, that number goes up to \$24 million dollars on an annual basis. Without this, the community colleges were poised to have \$20 million dollar deficits on an ongoing basis, which would have depleted their reserved by next year.

REP. ARORA (151ST): Thank you for saving money for our constituents and residents of Connecticut. Number two -- do you think that as a result of this consolidation the quality of services you provide in the education has improved and is better?

MARK OJAKIAN: I believe as we move towards the final goal of a single institution we are going to be in a better position to provide educational

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opportunities to our students. You will see more advisors on campuses because we're able to dedicate resources into advising on campus through our Guided Pathways initiative. You'll see more folks in the Financial Aid Office actually working with students to help them fill out their complicated FAFSA Forms. You will see more wrap-around services be available to our students in terms of [inaudible-00:37:26] and mental health and providing work-study opportunities for our students so that they can complete in a timely way. You'll see the success rates go up, and you'll also see the equity gap shrink.

REP. ARORA (151ST): So, one of the questions we hear quite often is that the pass rate or the number of students enrol versus who graduate is not high enough. Are you doing enough as a part of this whole effort to increase that rate?

MARK OJAKIAN: Yes, Representative, and I would argue that there are three principle goals to this initiative. One is to improve the success rates of students and the completion rates of students. The second it to reduce the equity gap between white and non-white students which is too large, and folks can argue that we should not be having this conversation because it makes people feel bad. I would argue that if we don't start talking about it in serious terms and actually putting actions in place to reduce it, you're going to see that widen even more. And then, thirdly, is to put our institutions on a much more financially viable platform into the future.

I indicated earlier that I'd made a commitment not to close a location, and I will stand by that

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commitment. My concern's always been that if we do not find ways to achieve these kinds of synergies and integrate administration, somebody's going to have to make a choice of which campuses stay open and which campuses do not stay open. I want to just point to one other thing. Representatives of our accreditors have been here a few times to talk about the needs that we have in the system, and they've been very consistent in the fact that at least nine out of our 12 institutions do not have resources that are sustainable over the long term. And 10 out of 12 have been put on sort of academic watch. Pat O'Brien said that specifically when she was here last year. Which means that if we don't start to improve our success rates, this conversation may not happen in this building or with me or with you. This conversation's going to happen with our accreditors who are going to say these single institutions no longer have the capacity to provide the opportunities to students that are necessary for a high-quality institution.

REP. ARORA (151ST): So, am I correct in concluding from what you just told me that you are able to increase success rate, work on reducing equity gaps, or to ensure other objectives while saving us money?

MARK OJAKIAN: Correct.

REP. ARORA (151ST): So, I'm sure doing something which is a win-win, I'm assuming is quite tough. If it were easy, it could have already been done. Do you think that some of these bills which we are suggesting today are going to hinder or hamstring you in doing more of it because I want you to do more of this -- increase the success rate more? I

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want to push you to do that. We all want more of it, and we want less of costs, and it looks like you are on the right path. We just need you to do more of those.

Are we going to hinder your ability or hamstring you when we bring more of these constraints on you? And while I'm also interested in talking about oversight -- so there's another question following -- but my question here is do you really think these are going to hinder and stop you from achieving the great goals which you have and from us asking you to do more?

MARK OJAKIAN: My short answer is yes. I believe that the, I think it's 5113, which would require legislative approval, would not only slow down the progress that we have currently made but might stop the initiative all together. When this bill was debated last year in committee and then went to the floor, if I remember correctly, there was a fiscal note that was attached to it that said that the passage of this legislation could mean that the savings that we were anticipating achieving could be slowed down, and I would say dramatically, because the bill last year, you know, had a very cumbersome process. This is a little less cumbersome, but to me it's still cumbersome. But I think that that bill in particular would slow down, if not halt, what we're doing, number one, and number two, our accreditors have indicated that they want to see the Board that's overseeing these institutions to be autonomous bodies to be free of political interference. And my fear is that they would not look kindly on this and that we would have a much

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more difficult time in the future, you know, getting this through.

REP. ARORA (151ST): Do you already have other pressures from other constituencies, you know, which are not letting you do enough of the consolidation. You know, the other folks who may be not benefiting or are finding it difficult to cope with change. As we know, change is always difficult to cope even if it's for one's own good. And I feel that personally and in institutions that always happens. Do you feel a lot of pushback or pressures from various other constituencies anyways?

MARK OJAKIAN: I think there's a need to have discussion and discourse around issues as complicated and as difficult as this is. There's always going to be opposition when change is involved and especially and bold initiative that looks to reinvent the way we offer higher education, you know, to our students. What I would say to you, Representative, is that, you know, all you have to do is attend the student panels of the Appropriations Committee and watch the students testify on their educational goals, opportunities, and roadblocks, and despite people who would want to see me go away and this whole thing to go away, I am laser-focused on making sure that the students that we serve have every opportunity to success.

REP. ARORA (151ST): So, it would be fair to say that there is already a lot of pressure on you from others. You would like more support from us rather than us also pushing you back because it's leadership. We're changing the system around here,

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and you would like support. Would that be a fair assessment?

MARK OJAKIAN: That would be correct, Representative, and I'm happy to take you on the road with me.

REP. ARORA (151ST): [Laughter]. One last question here which is basically what more can be done? Because in terms of five percent savings, it looks great, but in such change which you're bringing about, consolidating 13 institutions together under one administrative process. Is it something we're doing that five percent looks a little low to me? I come from a little bit business orientation. You should be able to get more synergies. Have we already hamstrung you so much that you can't be bold in increasing the amount of savings, and if we did something different, could you show us a roadmap to 10 percent savings instead of five percent over five years?

MARK OJAKIAN: I could show you a lot of roadmaps, Representative, which would probably get me in more trouble. What I would say is a couple of things. When we talk about the amount of money we're saving, that's purely on reductions in expenses, and I think we can over time achieve more than that number you were just talking about. Part of our equation is how do we increase our revenue? How do we make sure that we're enrolling more students in our schools? How are we making sure that we are keeping more students in our school? I mean, retention is the new enrollment, right? We have so many students that come in the fall semester, and then they leave in the spring semester, and then they might come

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back, you know, a year later in to the spring semester. I believe that if we get to a certain threshold of enrollment at our community colleges and given the savings we will be seeing from Students First, our community college will be sustainable into the future. I'm also fond of saying that the success of the PACT program, the Pledge to Advance Connecticut, is critical in this endeavor because it not only showcases our community colleges as the showplaces they should be, but it also ensures that we get more students in the door, more students who complete in a timely way and find employment in the State of Connecticut. So, it's not just cutting expenses on this end, but it's increasing revenue on this end, as well.

REP. ARORA (151ST): And my last question is are you keeping your course offerings -- improving your course offerings to include the new things which folks need to be successful? Because, you know, perhaps certain course offerings which were quite useful to get a job 10 years ago may not be today. It might be social media or cybersecurity and so on and so forth, and know there is always institutional inertia because it's hard to find folks to teach who are within the community or who are within the faculty. Are you doing enough to basically revamp or -- I won't say revamp; it's a strong work -- is to enhance the course offerings to be suitable to today's needs for our students who want to come to our college, do these two-year programs, and really get ahead and get jobs which are really good jobs. Because there are a lot of good jobs which can be done with some program, you know, in the technology field specifically, and Connecticut is a high

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education, high professional workforce. So are we doing enough? Are you spending enough time beyond the stuff you have to do on that very important topic to me and my constituents?

MARK OJAKIAN: Absolutely, Representative, and I don't want anybody to think that this is all I'm focused on. It's the most public thing I'm focused on currently, but it's not, you know -- there's a lot more that we're focusing on. And to your point, we are doing better, and we're doing more to be able to have our community colleges adapt to the needs of not only the businesses in their local community but also regionally and statewide. And we've been occupying a key seat at the Governor's Workforce Council because I think the governor understands the need to have education, higher education at all levels at that table to make sure we are meeting the needs of our employer base into the future. So, part of this is to help bring those relationships closer and to be able to provide those relationships more on a regional basis.

REP. ARORA (151ST): Great. Listen, you know, I think that we have to balance two things -- oversight and transparency versus giving you all the tools in this time, in making this change effective and doing the best, you know, we can do for our students. Thank you for your testimony here, and thank you, Chair Haskell.

MARK OJAKIAN: Thank you.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you very much, Representative Arora. Next we will go to -- just to go between parties now -- Representative Doucette.

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REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, President Ojakian, for being here today to discuss this very important issue. I think I don't have to tell you that this is something of real importance to our students that I talk to and, of course, the faculty when I visit Manchester Community College and, you know, I think it goes without saying that this is something that people are following pretty closely as it winds along, and I know it's been sort of a pretty length road thus far and still some more to go.

You touched on this a bit, but I do want to discuss a little more on the campus closure 5113. You mention, and then you just mentioned in your comments that the Accrediting Board has invoked the governance standard about independence of boards. Is this proposal something that's been specifically commented on, as you recall, by the Accrediting Board? Specifically the idea of having the legislature have some control over campus closures.

MARK OJAKIAN: Representative, I think what our accreditors is trying to do is sort of walk a fine line between what they publicly say based on their governance standards, but when Dr. Brittingham was here last and this bill actually was raised to her, she basically said, and I can find you the exact quote that what the Commission looks at is the autonomy of governing boards to make decisions for the institutions that they're responsible for.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): So, again, it goes more to that sort of philosophical objection, if you will, to autonomy in general, but it's not a specific standard, first of all.

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MARK OJAKIAN: Well, no, there is a specific standard that talks about --

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Correct, but it doesn't say that the legislature shall not have undue influence over the operations of --

MARK OJAKIAN: No, I would just argue though, Representative -- not argue but comment -- that the Commission, I believe, would not view a proposal like this that would pass to be in the best interest of the institutions and could severely hamper the ability of individual institutions to prosper in the future.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Okay. Let's talk about the proposal specifically a little bit, and you said earlier that you like to talk in specific examples, and I think that's good, as well. So, under this proposal, and I didn't really compare it, I know we had a few bills last year, and I didn't really compare it that closely, and maybe you can comment on that, as well, what the differences that you won't be looking at here and what we looked at last year.

So, you know, let's say that there is an institution. We don't want to single somebody out. We'll call it Nutmeg State College is recommended by the Board for a closure, and under this legislation, we would have a year to have a vote of the entire General Assembly or else it would be deemed approved. What would be, do you think, the harm to the institution to our report in general if we were to have that procedure during that year? So, a campus is identified to be closed, it's kicking around up here for up to a year. How would that

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play out, would you say? If the Board has made a determination that there's a campus that should be closed, presumably for financial reasons, how would that affect the operations of the entire system during that timeframe, that year?

MARK OJAKIAN: First of all, I think there would be a lot of uncertainty, both financially and programatic. I also just want to indicate that before the Board would entertain closing a campus or even a satellite of a campus, there would be an exhaustive process and analysis that would be done with full participation before the Board got to that point. So, it wouldn't be like on a Friday the Board thought of it, and on Monday they said we're going to close a campus, number one.

Number two, it basically goes back to my philosophical opposition to legislative approval over a responsibility that, I believe, a Board or Regents or a Board of Trustees should have. I would point to, which, you know, it's maybe not apples to apples, but when the University of Connecticut attempted to close for many, many years the Torrington Branch which had been losing money years and years and years and years, there was a lot of discussion in the legislature, and that campus closed, I would argue, a few years after it should have. But that was an example of a branch campus of the University and the difficulty with closing that branch given the political sort of posture in the building and in the community.

So, I just think if you're going to have a statutorily authorized board, and if you want to, you know -- I mean it's the legislative prerogative

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with the governor's approval to remove the authority of a board to make these kinds of decisions, then that's a different story. I would have to argue against that, as well. But I would say that given the way that the statute was originally set up, and some very detailed difficult negotiations went into the establishment of the Board of Regents. So not everything that Governor Malloy wanted to see in a Board of Regents became the final version of the bill because there was a negotiation with the legislature. I just, you know, Representative, continue to be philosophically opposed to legislative approval, not opposed to legislative oversight.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): I understand; that's helpful. Maybe back up a little bit, and perhaps this has been asked and answered at this conversation over the last few years, but what would be the Board of Regents' procedure -- not that it's been invoked or used to date for the closure of a campus or one of the institutions. Again, I suspect that's not specifically laid out somewhere, but how would you envision that process being initiated or discussed, and what sort of input would go into that if it were to come to pass?

MARK OJAKIAN: Well, I mean, it hasn't been specifically delineated in Board policy because the Board is committed to access and opportunity. So, to do that would be a little bit premature. I would envision a very thoughtful process of a detailed financial analysis, a detailed impact study of the effect of that institution or that campus to the community, what it would mean in terms of student disruption in terms of not being able to go

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to their home campus anymore. How would we navigate the programs and realign student access to another campus? I would envision that there would be public hearings that the Board would hold before they would entertain something as drastic as closing, you know, an institution.

But the Board is committed to retaining all of the locations and has been very clear about the principle that eliminating access leaves people behind. And so I would envision a very thoughtful and thorough, process. We have, you know, Board members from all walks of life, the public sector, the private sector, and both political sides of the aisle who have been appointed by leaders in this body. So, I'm sure we would have a very thoughtful, deliberative, and robust process, but, once again, I would not recommend, under my tenure, this to the Board to Regents.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): So that's not specifically laid out in Board policy and it's not obviously specifically laid out in statute anywhere currently. Correct?

MARK OJAKIAN: No, just like I don't know -- and I know it's a little bit different, but I don't know if the UConn closing of branches is laid out in policy either. I just, you know, I'd like some consistency even though it's not the same.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): So, again, the going back to -- is there anything short of, you know, that process that you laid out if we were to sort of delineate that and do something short of requiring an actual up-and-down vote of the General Assembly.

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Would that be something that you would also be philosophically opposed to?

MARK OJAKIAN: Probably, Representative. I'd have to see specifically what you're referring to. But I think, I really do believe there's a big difference between the roles of the executive and the legislative branch and also between oversight and fiduciary responsibility as a governing body.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Okay. No, it's interesting, and, again, as I read the language of this, I don't know -- an up or down vote obviously is pretty significant. The period of one year -- is that the right way to, you know, review this if we were to decide that it was appropriate to take an up or down vote.

MARK OJAKIAN: And I would also point out, Representative, that, you know, legislation is always -- there's always the ability to amend legislation once it's in, and, so, this would be one year from now, and then if it got -- you know a different scenario came into being, then it could be amended to be two years or three years. I just don't agree with what's being proposed, respectfully.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Shifting real quick to 104, the financial transparency, again in the specific language of that bill, is there anything that you would say that's listed here that is something that you don't currently provide or have ready information available that you could provide to us? Is there anything here that's particularly burdensome to provide or anything like that, that is in this proposed bill?

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MARK OJAKIAN: Not that's particularly burdensome. If you ask for information, you get information. Once again, I think having an annual transparency bill which builds on the one from last year, which requires specifically what to post on our website, I believe, is not the appropriate venue to do. We will provide whatever information, you know, that is requested, and we've never held back any information. Once again, I think I have a philosophical opposition to sort of micromanaging the operations of my agency.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Okay. And, again, a report is provided to the Consolidation Committee, and I'm not a member of that committee. I know it's like a joint sort of ad hoc committee, but you provide -- in what intervals is that information provided, or how often does that committee convene.

MARK OJAKIAN: The committee meets in January and July. We have to report. The committee, as I understand it, is comprised of members of this committee as well as the Higher Education Subcommittee. So, I don't know why you wouldn't be on it.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): If I could just interject, as I understand, it is the leadership of the Higher Education Committee and the membership of the Higher Education Subcommittee within the Appropriations Committee, as I was just telling the Representative that.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): That's right. Okay. So, this information then has been -- is provided in one form or another is your testimony today at this point, or has been provided, is on the website, is

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regularly provided to the Consolidation Committee?  
Okay.

MARK OJAKIAN: Correct.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): And just for my understanding, if we were to look -- and I'd be interested to see, you know, the last report of the Consolidation Committee, and I'm sure I can get that elsewhere.

MARK OJAKIAN: I believe the Clerk gets the report or not gets the report.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Okay. So it could be somewhere in my inbox from a couple months ago, and I'll certainly seek it out. Is it correct that the information that's being asked for in this bill, if you were to provide today, obviously doesn't reflect the actual cost and the actual cost savings that's anticipated by the students for full implementation of the Students First plan because we're obviously not, you know, we're only part-way through that implementation. Is that accurate?

MARK OJAKIAN: The last report we submitted did have our detailed financial analysis on the savings we had achieved to date and our projected savings for the future. So, we did that, and we periodically report that to the Board of Regents and happy to make all of those reports available to the committee, as well.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Okay. So, and we do hear in the meantime that the System Office expenditures have increased over the last few years. Is that accurate?

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MARK OJAKIAN: Yeah. I'll let Ben address this, but I would just say a couple of things. Seventy-two percent of the services, of the cost of the System Office goes to specifically provide services to the community colleges; seventy-two percent of our budget. We now have some additional expenses at the System Office which will be becoming part of the one college when we move over to the one college. We're in the process of creating service-level agreements in those integrated administrative areas between campuses and the System Office to maybe more accurately reflect the usage of those services, -- I'll let Ben go over the specifics -- but this is information that I think we provided to the Appropriations Committee, to the Subcommittee, and we're happy to provide you with a detailed accounting of our System Office expenses.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Okay.

BEN BARNES: Yeah, you're absolutely correct that this is probably --

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): I'm so sorry to interrupt. You're well known in the building, Mr. Barnes. You're probably sick of the -- [Crosstalk]

BEN BARNES: Connecticut State Colleges and Universities.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you.

BEN BARNES: The costs for the System Office have increased for a couple of reasons, the most significant being that we are undertaking a consolidation of mostly back office functions. Consolidation typically incurs taking expenses and activities from the periphery of an organization and

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bringing it into one place, and during this transition, that one place is the System Office. So, we are providing -- currently we're hiring people to consolidate payroll processing, as an example. And, so instead of having several dozen people who provide payroll processing at campus locations, we are going to have a somewhat smaller number of people who provide payroll processing at the System Office. We are achieving those reductions in effort through attrition for a number of reasons. Because it's a more appropriate way in a public sector organization to achieve change and also because of constraints that we face as a result of the job security provisions in the 2017 SEBAC agreement.

There are a couple of other things that are happening with the System Office. We undertook a major modernization of all of our IT systems over the last six or eight years, and when you put in a new system like you upgrade Banner and put it on the web, and some of the other things that we've done, those changes typically the first year or two or in some cases three of operations of those IT systems are included in capitalized cost of the upgrade because it's operating it while it's being upgraded. A lot of those major changes are what we refer to as coming off bond, which means that the operating costs of our financial systems and other systems are coming into our budget now, and those are funded in the System Office. So we've seen this year about \$5 million, we're going to see another increase of a similar size for next year in costs that reflect the fact that we are now at a different part of the life cycle of our IT systems. So those two things,

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combination indeed have resulted in increased costs over the last couple of years, although we actually expect the costs to the System Office to diminish pretty significantly next year because we are going to begin cost allocating the shared services that we are putting in place now for the community colleges. So, they will pay directly for the services; in the example I gave before, for payroll services based on the number of paychecks that we need to process for them.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Okay, thank you. I appreciate that, and we do hear that concern. We may hear it today. I wanted to give you an opportunity to comment on that. I understand that, you know, those numbers are essentially a snapshot in time and that we're midway through this implementation. So, that's understood, but I wanted to give you an opportunity to comment on that. That's all I have. Thank you for your answers. Obviously, it gives us something to think about. It's very important, again, to the system and everyone involved; so, I appreciate it. Thank you.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. Representative Smith.

REP. SMITH (48TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, President Ojakian for being here today. With regard to 5114, the training bill, just a few questions. I think what you're saying there is that at confirmation, there's an on-boarding session that takes place with new regents that are joining, and can you tell me how long that session lasts?

MARK OJAKIAN: There are different sessions for different items. For example, there's a session on

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their statutory and ethics responsibilities as a result of becoming public officials. I'm trying to find the list here so I can be --

REP. SMITH (48TH): For now, that's okay. I just wanted to know. So it's more than one session is what you're saying.

MARK OJAKIAN: Oh, absolutely, and as part of the introduction to the committee process. So, if you're on the Finance Committee, then you have an in-depth session to talk about the operating budget, the capital budget, how tuition and fees are set, what are some of the underlying audit responsibilities of the Board. So, depending on what committee you're assigned to, you have in-depth training, as well.

REP. SMITH (48TH): Okay, and are there sort of annual followups to update members of the, you know, other regents with respect to changes in best practice policies that come across --

MARK OJAKIAN: If there are changes that happen with regard to any of the items, then those members automatically would receive additional education or additional information relative to those changes, and many times that will occur either at the full Board level or at the committee process.

REP. SMITH (48TH): And one last question. Will you be willing to provide for us a matrix or a cross-reference between what's done presently and the items that are included in the proposed bill so that we can sort of get a gap analysis, if there is one, of [Crosstalk]

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MARK OJAKIAN: Actually it's represented in my written testimony; you have a full list of the sort of training opportunities and educational sessions that we provide to Board members.

REP. SMITH (48TH): Right, but in that list, are some of the areas that are covered in the proposed bill subsumed into some of those other areas is really my question?

MARK OJAKIAN: Yes, they are.

REP. SMITH (48TH): And could you tell us where, or can you provide to us the list or show where it is?

MARK OJAKIAN: We can provide it. Yes.

REP. SMITH (48TH): Thank you very much.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. Representative Betts. Thank you for your patience. I didn't realize we had passed over you.

REP. BETTS (78TH): No, I know. You [crosstalk] Thank you very much, and thank you for your testimony today. I have a couple questions. The first one is did you or your office produce this -- maybe you haven't seen it.

MARK OJAKIAN: I'm old; I can't see that far away. No, Representative. That's the Office of Higher Education.

REP. BETTS (78TH): Okay, thank you. I wonder if you could --

MARK OJAKIAN: [Laughing] I was hoping we didn't produce a thick thing like that. That's not on-line and readily available to everybody.

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REP. BETTS (78TH): Well, you've read my mind. Anyway, I wonder if you could walk us through the process and timetable for making a recommendation of closing a community college, and what I mean by that because, as I understand it and what I've read about it, is you're not in favor of the legislature retaining the ability to vote up or down on a recommendation like that. I'm wondering what the process is to reach that conclusion and make a recommendation. I mean, have you taken steps, for example, before reaching that. Have you taken steps specifically to improve or alter the adverse factors that would lead to a recommendation to close a community college?

MARK OJAKIAN: So, Representative, as I indicated just a little bit earlier, the Board currently does not have a delineated process for closing a campus because the Board has never entertained closing a campus or limiting access, and before that would even be entertained, there would have to be a very deliberate and thoughtful process around what this would mean in terms of finances, access, the region, the community -- all of those variables. And I am sure if the Board were to even consider having that conversation, then they would develop a process which would include a lot of public participation. The other thing to remember is, you know, we need to comply with our accreditor's standards no matter if we're closing a school or we're consolidating schools. Nothing can happen in this arena without the commission approving what we are doing. So, I'm very fond of saying that the backstop that people have who are concerned about this endeavor is the New England Commission on Higher Education. Because

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they are not going to approve an enterprise that they don't believe complies with all of their quality standards.

REP. BETTS (78TH): Thank you for that. And I understand that, and I personally have served on boards where we've had to make some traumatic and painful steps, but I'm also familiar with the idea you'd mentioned before about it being too political when it gets into the legislature. I know when people are appointed to boards it is not uncommon to have people appointed that have like-mind attitudes about certain things on an educational board. And I view the idea of the legislature being checks and balance a little differently than what you've been doing or saying because obviously we have constituents who are going to appropriately let us know their feelings, whether it's the teachers, whether it's the students, but also the community because the community college obviously has been there for a long period of time. It's become a very important part of marketing the community as well as academics of it.

I would think if you or the Board had a strong recommendation to close a college, let's say for financial reasons, if the case is made regardless of how people feel about it, it seems to me as if you would have confidence in the legislature being able to say this is unfortunate, we don't like, but obviously, like anything when it's closed, you've made a very compelling case, you've tried certain steps that have not been able to turn it around, why would we deviate from that process?

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MARK OJAKIAN: Because I don't believe philosophically that if you have a board that's both empowered through commission standards and through statutory fiduciary responsibility, that responsibility should sort of be abdicated to another entity. And I'm not arguing checks and balances. I believe in checks and balances. But I've seen through this entire process the sort of natural -- sort of tension that exists between looking at the system and the state as a whole and trying to do what's best for the entire student population and balance those against the needs of an individual institution with a local community and local constituency. And I think we're doing the right thing in balancing those in moving this initiative forward.

REP. BETTS (78TH): On that note, if I could, see if you can help all of us on this. We're elected officials desiring to represent the interests of our community.

MARK OJAKIAN: Correct.

REP. BETTS (78TH): Can you make the case or say what we should say to our constituents if we abdicate the responsibility of participating in the decision to close a community -- to our constituents? Do they not expect us to be able to represent their issues or give them some feedback in terms of what the process is going on?

MARK OJAKIAN: Oh, absolutely. I'm not questioning the role of the legislature in terms of working with their constituents at all. What I'm indicating is that we have a process, I believe, currently in place where these kinds of decisions, number one,

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are made. But, number two, the appointment that are made to the Board are not just made in one place. So, the governor has some appointments, the minority leader has an appointment and the House and the Senate. I did not indicate to your leader that I needed somebody of like mind to appoint, nor did I with Senator Fasano of like mind or Representative Aresimowicz or Senator Looney. And, so, you know, there has been opportunities when Board members, who have this responsibility have come before, not only the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee, but the full legislature to have those kinds of conversations about their opinions and their perspectives on different initiatives effecting higher education.

So, I'm not trying to diminish the role and responsibility of legislators in working with their constituents. I understand that fully well. What I'm just trying to indicate is that I believe there's a difference between approval and oversight.

REP. BETTS (78TH): But, are you not also in that inference thinking or suggesting that the legislature may, indeed, not agree with the recommendation when, in fact, we might.

MARK OJAKIAN: I'm not as concerned about who's going to agree and who's not going to agree than a process that I think would prolong and quite possibly prevent progress from happening because of the political nature of this building and because of the political nature in general, you know, of being an elected representative. You know, I've worked for many folks in the political arena most of my career. So, I understand what happens, you know, in

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this building and the dynamics between the executive and the legislative branch and how things, you know, progress or don't progress. And I quite honestly, Representative, other than respecting the legislature's responsibility to oversee the function of government, what I do see in this piece of legislation, quite honestly, is an attempt to stop the consolidation. Very candid.

REP. BETTS (78TH): I can understand that and I certainly do understand your point of view, but I also feel from a legislator's point of view, it's a big ask because, as I said to you before, what do we say to our constituents who say, "Why would you give that up when you're one of our avenues to turn to to be able to make our concerns heard, and frankly if you give up that responsibility, how are you representing us if you give up that responsibility?"

MARK OJAKIAN: Representative, I totally understand your argument, and I respect the argument. I just don't happen to agree; I'm sorry. I don't know how else to say it.

REP. BETTS (78TH): That's fine; we'll still get along.

MARK OJAKIAN: Well, hopefully we will. We respect each other, so that's the important part.

REP. BETTS (78TH): Yeah, no problem. Thank you very much.

MARK OJAKIAN: You're welcome.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Senator Haskell.

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SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you very much, Representative, for that. I just want to echo what many of my colleagues have said, first off, that I find President Ojakian, you and your team, to be just unbelievably responsive to questions, whether it's in a formal setting like this or informal. So, thank you off the bat for that.

MARK OJAKIAN: You're welcome.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Something that frustrates me about these public hearing formats is that there isn't really a chance for a rebuttal. We'll hear from you for a few hours and then later this afternoon or evening, we'll hear for a few hours from those who might disagree with what you said. So, if it's okay, I wanted to give you an opportunity to respond to some of the things I saw in the testimony.

For one thing, there are those who are going to question the cost savings, and I'm so glad that Mr. Barnes is here to verify or shed greater light on those cost savings. There are some who question the \$11 million, I believe it was, in savings last year, the projected \$16 million in savings next year by saying that attrition is sort of -- that these were all attained through attrition rather than actual savings. Is attrition not part of the plan? I mean in many of these cases, are you not planning to replace the positions where there have been retirements?

MARK OJAKIAN: Let me just generally speak to that, Senator, and then I'll turn it over to Ben to be, you know, more specific. And I think you're right. There continues to be this narrative that all of

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these savings are made up, that nothing is true. And I would just point to a couple of areas. I would first like to point out that when we came up with our savings targets and we refined our savings targets and we provided detailed backup financial data for our financial targets, and that information went to the Office of Fiscal Analysis, not from us but a legislative request to take a look at our financial analysis. They came back, and they validated our financial analysis. So, we can talk about truth or not truth, but we have the information to back it up.

I would also argue that attrition and workforce reduction through attrition is part of the plan. You know, we have 85, 87 percent of our budget is personnel; 95 percent are represented by collective bargaining units, so we have wage increases every year that we need to keep pace with. So, we have a high cost of personnel in the system. And, so, what I would argue is when we have an initiative in front of us that looks to move to a new model, and under that new model, certain positions are no longer going to be part of the new model, when folks leave those positions, we don't replace them. And under the new model, we are combining certain senior-level positions to do more than one thing on a campus. I have some specific examples I can go through about individual people, but the 10.9 is real. It's been brought to the Board of Regents with an in-depth financial analysis. We will provide you with whatever information you need. You know, people are going to say it's not real. I can't -- I mean, I have the analysis and the facts in front of me, and I can't argue otherwise. But I'll turn it over to

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Ben to talk about attrition and have that conversation.

BEN BARNES: Sure, thank you. Well, first of all I would to caveat to say that predictions of the future suffer always from uncertainty about what will happen in the future, and, so, I don't believe that our projections have solved that fundamental problem that there is uncertainty about it. However, the attrition numbers that we have are based on reports that we've run out of Core-CT, the system that pays all the employees in the State of Connecticut, and we've looked for an 18-month period covering the first half of this fiscal year and all of the prior fiscal year, and we've evaluated all the changes that went in it.

So, we've totaled up the number of people who left because they resigned or retired mostly. There is another group of nonrenewals; these are people who are working in temporary contract positions who are not renewed, and, so, they leave our employment. And then we've looked at all the people we've hired. And when you sort out all the people who are academic who are teaching classes, the adjunct faculty and full-time faculty, and you sort out the student workers for instance. There are a lot of student workers who come on and leave every few months.

When you take those folks out of the mix, you can count it up, and we have been consistently on track to have net attrition of between 40 and 60 employees with a value of approximately \$3 million -- usually a little north of \$3; it's been between \$3 and \$3.7 million dollars over the last several years per

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year, of attrition. This is a reflection of a couple things: One, that we are intentionally not refilling positions in areas that we know are administrative areas that are going to be impacted by the reorganization. So, we have planned to replace presidents of community colleges with campus CEOs. So, when presidents leave, we don't refill those positions; we refill them at the new level, as an example. There also is a fair amount of attrition in these areas that is the result of, you know, where we are demographically. This is true for the state as a whole and certainly true for CSCU. You know, baby boomers make up a large portion of our workforce. We have retirement programs for senior employees that typically allow them to retire with full benefits in their early 60s, and there are a lot of workers who are approaching that level, and they leave. And we are taking advantage of that attrition to remake our workforce in the design that we envision and this Board has envisioned under Students First.

I think that those savings are documented and demonstrable based on data from our payroll system and that they are -- it's not that we're not filling any jobs. The last point I'll make is that this is net attrition; so, typically when we say we've achieved \$3 million dollars of attrition one year, that means that, you know, \$5 million dollars' worth of people retired or left and \$2 million dollars' worth of new folks were hired to replace those in critical positions or in the sort of new version of what the sort of successor to that job looks like under the new organization. So, we are hiring to fill critical needs but doing that in a way that

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beings to move the new organization toward the new design.

MARK OJAKIAN: And as I indicated, Senator, we're combining positions to be reflective of the new model at the senior level to, what I believe is to reduce some redundancy in those areas. And so that's part of the, you know, overall attrition -- the savings -- number because we're no longer having these two, we're having one do two sort of functional areas.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you very much for that answer. I also want to give you a chance to respond to the notion that Central Office expenditures and expenses are growing, \$30 million in 2007 rounding up the numbers to \$46 million in 2020. You mentioned that 72 percent of those Central Office expenditures go toward supporting the community colleges directly. Can you explain just the mechanics of that exactly? What sort of programs that were previously funded by the community colleges are now being paid for by the Central Office?

MARK OJAKIAN: So, for example, you know, IT is all coordinated through the Central Office which provides IT services and, you know, comprehensive applications to all of the community colleges. We do the collective bargaining for all of the community colleges. We handle most of the grievances for the community colleges. We provide legal advice to the community colleges. We do a lot of other HR functions, but we also do the accounts payable and accounts receivable in many cases for the community colleges. And, so, we can provide you

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with a detailed list of what we do and what -- I think we provided that to Appropriations. We're happy to provide that to you, as well. But we do provide significant centralized support to the community colleges.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you very much. When I go back to my community, as Representative Betts said, we often get asked by constituents about the Students First plan. There are many who say that they're entirely supportive of a back office cost savings consolidation. They think that absorbing payroll and applications and financial aid and purchasing and broad curriculum oversight into a single office seems to make sense. But they don't understand why joint accreditation is necessary. What is the distinction between consolidating back office functions and accreditation? Why is that extra step a core component of Students First?

MARK OJAKIAN: Well, I think there're a number of reasons that a singly accredited institution moves the needle on student success, provides you with a better financial model to deal with, and reduces the equity gap. The fact that we're able to scale without bringing additional resources on each individual campus as our Guided Pathways model, which as you know is a proven model of success in the rest of the country. To move the needle on student success wouldn't be possible without a single accreditation.

We also take a look at the programs that we're currently offering, right? Because what we have is we have single accreditations based on the NECHE standards, and we want to go to one accreditation.

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So, the fact that you will have one common general education core and that a student from college A can go to college B without having to reapply, without having to get his transcript, without having to wonder whether his credits will all be transferred from one institution to another. That example I gave before on the STEM student is just one of a multitude of issues we have in navigating the current system.

We're also not able to provide the proper level of guidance to students and administrators on campuses because of privacy and federal regulations. So, if I'm a student at Capital Community College and I want to also, you know, the best path for me is to go to Manchester, right? A student is the only one that can request that that information be shared from one campus to another campus. So, our advising system will never be as effective if we're 12 loosely confederated institutions. And the student will suffer, and the success rates will continue to lag behind the rest of New England.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you very much. I have just one final question, and that's that I know faculty have played a key role in shaping -- faculty for me to the community college campuses have played a key role in shaping the Students First plan. Yet there's a public perception that the majority or that many faculty members are opposed or that they're not filling their seats on various boards and commissions. Can you talk about what faculty buy-in you have seen and to what extent faculty continue to be involved in the process?

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MARK OJAKIAN: Sure. Faculty continues to be involved in this process at many levels. Before we had folks that opted out of the process recently, which is, by the way, less than 10 percent of people working on these committees. We had 400 people from the campuses working on different consolidation committees. The majority of folks are working in the area of curriculum development and trying to align curriculum where it makes sense, to set prerequisites across the 12 institutions that make sense in terms of student experience and student access. Those folks continue to work hard to make sure that their input is given.

We have had requests in the past that faculty elect their own representatives to these groups, and that was the right thing to do, and, so, we said, "faculty governing bodies elect your representative," and they did. And, you know, it was hopeful that everybody who was sitting at the table would be, you know, trying to offer some constructive path forward. You know, Senator, I continue to say that since 2017 there's been no other plan offered to meet the challenges we are now facing. Just saying no to me is not an answer, and it's not a plan.

So, we will continue to work with everybody who wants a seat at the table, you know, to move this forward. I'll give you one example of sort of how this has taken on a Tale of Two Cities. So, as part of the overall approach to developing a common general education program, there was a committee put into place that came up with some threshold for what those credits and courses should look like. And those went back to the campus, and when campus gave

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comments and suggestions, they were incorporated into the final product that then will ultimately go to the Board of Regents that has responsibility over developing a common general education core.

My team made every attempt to go to every campus to sit with people, to have brown bag lunch, to talk about, you know, what are the challenges, what do you see that can work, what can't work, and we had a great deal of success in those areas. Some campuses refused to have my team come and talk to them. So, I can't make people do things, as much as people think that's what I do, but I am very, very appreciative and proud of everybody who's been part of this process from my team -- and my team isn't just my team with the Central Office. They're folks that have come from the campuses that are working at a coordinating level on all of those committees.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you very much. I know I had said last question, but I just want to make one small question. And that's I notice testimony from the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges with 2000 colleges and universities as members. They mention that H.B. 5113 could lead to legislative politicking, and I think there's a perception in this building that we are -- it would be a dereliction of our duty to hand this power over to the Board of Regents without sufficient legislative oversight and approval on things of that nature. The thing that I love about this job is that we have 49 other examples to look towards; we're not operating in a vacuum. And of the peer institutions, of the peer boards that you've encountered, how unusual is it the power that the Board of Regents currently has, and how unusual

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would it be to put legislative approval for both mergers and closures into the hands of the General Assembly?

MARK OJAKIAN: Well, I think it varies, Senator. I think there are some states where there is explicit authority granted to a board. There're other states where it is not explicit. And, so, where it's not explicit, I don't know how they sort of figure it out because I've looked at all of those other statutes. And I continue to go back to my initial sort of response which is that I am fully supportive of legislative oversight. In 2011 when the Board was established, this was an authority that was given to the Board in 2011 through a lot of negotiations between the governor and the legislature. I know that firsthand. And, so, I think what you're looking to do is to take that authority away because there's been controversy around this issue. Now I fully embrace oversight. I just don't believe that oversight is approval.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you so much, President Ojakian, for your answers and so grateful for your time today. Thank you, Chairman Haddad.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. I think Representative Wood has some questions.

REP. WOOD (141ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Busy day here, so I apologize for being a little late getting here. Thank you to you both for being here. A couple of questions. How is a CEO different from a president? You said you're installing CEOs in all the local campuses. How does that differ from being a president?

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MARK OJAKIAN: Well, I think -- first of all, according to accrediting purposes currently, each campus has to have a chief executive officer according to standards. It doesn't say what it has to be called.

REP. WOOD (141ST): Sorry. This is NECHE standards? Whose standards?

MARK OJAKIAN: Yes. It says chief executive officer in NECHE standards. And, so, as we decided to go down that this transition, when presidents have decided to retire, we have replaced them with those individuals. I would say that the CEO will continue to have operational responsibility over the day-to-day functioning of that campus. Clearly having a chief executive officer, you know, allows us to have some budgetary savings from a president sort of role that had been in the previous iteration to a chief executive officer iteration. But they will continue to have many of the same responsibilities that they currently have, but they will just be reporting into the president of the new institution.

REP. WOOD (141ST): So, by budgetary savings -- they're doing the same job essentially, is what you're saying.

MARK OJAKIAN: More or less currently because we're in a transition mode.

REP. WOOD (141ST): But the new CEOs have been hired for the campuses where the president has left. A CEO has been installed in the place of a president leaving.

MARK OJAKIAN: Correct. And while we want to maintain the individual accreditations as we move

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towards this, then the responsibilities have remained the same.

REP. WOOD (141ST): So, what is the budgetary savings, if you can give me an example of the spread between the president and CEO.

MARK OJAKIAN: So, what I would suggest is presidents who have departed perhaps made \$250,000 dollars plus fringe benefits, and the CEOs are now being hired at about \$150,000 dollars.

REP. WOOD (141ST): So, I'm curious because they're doing the same job.

MARK OJAKIAN: Currently.

REP. WOOD (141ST): Currently as the president. So, how wouldn't most candidates for CEO be candidates for presidential searches?

MARK OJAKIAN: They might be, Representative. I will tell you that currently we have searches going on for chief executive officers at five institutions that have interim chief executive officers, and the number and diversity of the pool that we are receiving is just astounding. People view this as a new bold innovative approach to delivering higher education in the country and want to be a part of this change.

REP. WOOD (141ST): How do the resumes differ between the presidents and the CEOs? I mean, \$100,000 dollars is a big spread, so I'm just curious. I do question the same candidate who is applying for a presidential job at \$250,000 dollars plus fringe --

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MARK OJAKIAN: I'm not so sure that they would apply for a presidential job. They could apply for a presidential job if they chose. They know what the qualifications are. They know what the compensation is. They know what the responsibilities will be in the future organization, and they chose to apply.

REP. WOOD (141ST): Do they have fewer years in the field? Do they have fewer academic credentials? There must be a difference in some other way besides just --

MARK OJAKIAN: Some of the CEOs, as our presidents, come from the academic world, some come from the student affairs world. They may have, you know, fewer years in a leadership role, but, you know, without going through each resume and giving you -- but there are people I will tell you that have left Connecticut, were in very senior roles in Connecticut, who have now chosen to come back and apply to be in this pool.

REP. WOOD (141ST): Thank you.

MARK OJAKIAN: You're welcome.

REP. WOOD (141ST): Another question is you mentioned -- I thought it was interesting you mentioned no other plan has been presented.

MARK OJAKIAN: Right.

REP. WOOD (141ST): Would you be open to another plan being presented?

MARK OJAKIAN: Representative, in April 2017, which is almost three years ago, we rolled out Students First. We have consistently asked for people to be

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part of the solution and have sought input on many different levels. I think even in front of this committee last year, members of the staffs and faculty said just give us a few more weeks and we'll come up with a plan; that was over a year ago. The challenges we are facing, Representative, are so immediate and so severe that we need to continue to build on the momentum we currently have.

We plan to go in April back to our accreditors, at their invitation, with our two-year implementation plan and still have a target date in conversations with them for 2023 as being a fully integrated accredited institution.

REP. WOOD (141ST): The other thing you said today that I found surprising was that you are "fully supportive of legislative oversight."

MARK OJAKIAN: Yes.

REP. WOOD (141ST): Then why do you resist? Why in your testimony do you say, "I urge the committee to take no action on House Bill 5113"?

MARK OJAKIAN: Because, Representative, I draw a distinction in a public policy sense between oversight and approval. And I believe that given the role that the Board of Regents has per the enabling statutes and given Senator Haskell just quoted a letter from probably the most prestigious governing body association in the country, to not interject politics into the governing of higher education institutions, I believe that that would not be in the best interests of this system, of the institutions, and of the students.

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I have always been supportive of oversight, providing information, having conversations with individual legislators or groups, FOI requests, meeting with different constituencies on campuses, the Higher Education Consolidation Committee. I mean, I can't tell you the numbers of times that we've had conversations in an attempt to try to share information and get some comments and concerns and questions back from members of this chamber.

REP. WOOD (141ST): You also made a statement that you have tremendous buy-in from a number of campuses. Yet, I've seen, and I think most of us have seen the petitions that have been signed by, I think, close to a thousand, if not over a thousand, people associated on all the different campuses that quite strongly oppose the path you are taking. So, those numbers outweigh the numbers that are in support of this, so --

MARK OJAKIAN: If I could just interrupt. I'm sorry.

REP. WOOD (141ST): I just want to finish my thought, too. There are a number of people who don't feel you've been transparent and that you are not open and that you're not open to conversation and another point of view. So, I think that's why there is this push from all the campuses statewide. There's concern because everyone feels very loyal to their local community college. Thank you.

MARK OJAKIAN: Absolutely, Representative. I would say a couple things. There're people that are opposed to this, and they've taken, you know, their responsibility, I think, seriously and have put forth petitions and, you know, we don't support

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this, and I will indicate again with no sort of alternative to increasing our completion rates, reducing the equity gap, and financially sustaining our institutions, number one.

I find it interesting at times, and this is very personal, that for somebody who's been known throughout his career and in this building as being a consensus builder, as listening, as trying to hear out other people's perspectives and make changes accordingly, and being very transparent, that because somebody is disagreeing with me, then I'm not transparent, that my intentions are not pure, and that I don't really care about the best interests of the students that I serve.

I am happy to have debates and conversations on substance based in fact any day of the week. I just understand from a state perspective where we are and where we need to go. And I brought -- and you weren't here earlier, Representative -- but I went back in preparation for this once again and took a look at all of the last accreditation visit reports from NECHE at our colleges whereas you know 10 out of 12 are on a watch list academically for their completion rates, and 9 out of 12 have been cited for the lack of financial resources in terms of student supports. And there was a theme, and I was not going to read them, and I'm not going to read them here today, but I'm happy to provide those with you -- concern about the future viability of the institution based on completion rates and financial resources.

REP. WOOD (141ST): How will the completion rates change in the new consolidation?

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MARK OJAKIAN: Because the completion rates are going to be driven by our One-College Guided Pathways Initiative which has been proven in other states to increase completion rates dramatically when you have a system-wide approach to advising. And the governor was very -- I complimented the governor because he gave us a \$2 million dollar down payment on providing more advisors, you know, on our campuses. But we need to be able to do this seamlessly to 12 institutions if we're going to be able to provide the supports on day one to all of students to on-board them into the appropriate program of study, to watch and monitor them through their experience whether it's academically or through those other support services we need to provide to students, and then ultimately help them complete, complete on time, and get a job or a career that they can be proud of.

REP. WOOD (141ST): Thank you. Why is that not being done now?

MARK OJAKIAN: First of all, we don't have the resources to do it now, but if you were to do it at 12 separate institutions that are separately accredited, we would have to provide resources to each individual campus to be able to guide that on their campus. There would be no guarantee that that would be seamless across all 12, and those issues that continue to persist around the example I gave before about a student couldn't complete their course of study at another institution because the prerequisites were different, and there weren't able to be seamlessly guided by an advisor because of privacy and regulatory issues. There are a lot of issues that go into singly accredited versus being

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able to seamlessly scale these kinds of initiatives for the benefits of students.

REP. WOOD (141ST): Yeah, I just think that top-down -- the concern for many across the state, from what I've heard, is two-fold. One, so often when something gets regionalized or a big state agency is created -- I use the Human Services Department as a great example. Every community in our state in 1990 had their own Human Service Department, and they gradually got consolidated to one big state agency at the state level. I spent a good bit of time helping track Medicaid applications because our local communities, local control, and local responsibility, they knew where all these people lived and how to help them with the application. It gets sent to this big, God knows what and where, funnel, and I end up having to track it down three of four months later. So, I think that's the concern that bigger is not better, and top-down is not better.

Another great concern that I hear from a huge number of people, particularly down in our district, is that when the Board of Regents was created and the community college and the state system merged, it was to save \$25 million dollars, and it did not save that. So, why are we to believe that this same group of people is going to be able to save all that money and create a better system when logic and practicality of grassroots up is a better model?

So those are the concerns, and that's where we -- you know, we hope this works out. I think everybody wants to see a deeply functional community college system. It is the core of education for so many

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students, and it's deeply important. So, I think it's just great concern, for those two issues in particular.

MARK OJAKIAN: As I said, you know, many times before, I understand the concern. I understand the passion and the advocacy for community colleges. If I didn't share that commitment and I didn't think that this was the path to be able to provide 21st century higher education to our state citizens, I wouldn't be up here today, you know, having these kinds of conversations. So, I understand that it's different and that there are concerns out there. I'm happy, as I've offered in the past, to come and go over specifics with you on how things are going to change and how things are going to work to make, you know, you a little more comfortable with the challenges that are ahead.

I mean, I believe the community college is the future of our workforce development enterprise in the State of Connecticut, and you don't know how many places I go and people will say to me, you know, "we need to do more" -- Representative Doucette's not here -- "but more around, you know, manufacturing and dual enrollment between our high schools and our community colleges, and how can we get all of that done?"

Well, you need to provide a better way to operate in order to have the resources to do the things you want to do, but as always, Representative, I appreciate your advocacy for the community college, and I'm happy to come and talk to you whenever.

REP. WOOD (141ST): Last question, and perhaps the Chairs could -- before I came in, was there more of

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an explanation over oversight versus approval that I could watch on the video? Or could I get the answer from enough on the video? Okay. I'm just curious how you're parsing the words oversight and approval on legislative oversight. So, I will watch the video.

MARK OJAKIAN: Thank you. It's compelling, Representative. [Laughter].

REP. WOOD (141ST): Popcorn provided?

MARK OJAKIAN: Yes, and a glass of wine at least. Sorry.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): We have a lot of different kinds of public hearings, and this is one, I think, that only a certain level of policy wonk can really enjoy this public hearing. But let me -- I'm going to ask you a couple of questions, but I do want to just say, we appreciate your stamina. We're at two hours now, and you're done a great job at responding to our questions. We've come and gone as some are able to do. I do have a general rule of trying to limit the amount of time in the hot seat to the amount of time it takes to drive to Scranton, Pennsylvania [Laughter] which is about three hours, and, so, we'll get you out of there pretty soon.

MARK OJAKIAN: Thank you, Representative. I would describe this as my Benghazi moment [Laughter]. If Hillary Clinton could sit through Benghazi, I can sit here.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): I had just a couple of final questions about some of the things. I mean, one of the things I just think is interesting about this conversation about 5113 is that we have had some

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limited amount of experience with not campus closures or institution closures, but certainly with the closures of service centers of community colleges. And, so, a couple of years ago, you know, I think it was the Meriden campus, the satellite of Middlesex, closed, and, in fact, this legislature did vote on whether or not that should close. We passed a bill through both the Senate and the House, and it was vetoed subsequently by the governor, but everybody, you know, in the legislature had an opportunity to weigh in on that.

Moving forward, I think, you know, if we're talking about a closure or a consolidation -- maybe not a consolidation but a campus closure or satellite -- a location closing down, it's not out of the realm of possibility that we would be having that conversation at the legislature anyways. What the difference is, I suppose, is that process outlined in our state statutes, and does that process have any sort of guardrails on it? That one at the time -- and what is the standard that has to be achieved of consensus between the legislature and the executive branch for whether or not the legislature's opinion carries the day or not? And in that instance, you know, we could not muster enough consensus to override the concerns of the governor. But it's interesting that as we have this conversation, it's not as though the legislature is not going to assert itself in some way if there were a proposed closure of a campus or a site.

We've closed, I think and I think in both instances there's something that remains in both Meriden and Willimantic, but I did just want to ask this question, I guess, with respect to that since, you

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know, in those instances, you must have had some kind of process that outlined whether or not those satellite campuses were open or closed. We talked about how you don't have a set policy for determining if, I guess it would be called an institution now, but would be a satellite campus under the One-College system. But could you just describe for us -- I don't think you were in the system -- but what was the process for determining whether or not those satellite campuses should close.

MARK OJAKIAN: No, and I would go back to that as a situation where there wasn't a recognition of the role of the legislature or the delegation of that community in those conversations. I was not in the system then. I was in the Governor's Office then, and I remember that morning finding out through the Hartford Courant that the Meriden campus was going to close. You know, not one that enjoys surprises from members of a team, you know I understood that there was, you know, some concern, and it was in the Senate at that time with Senator Bartolomeo, about her local campus. And the bill passed, not just for that campus, but it required that any campus that closed had to be approved by the legislature.

The governor did veto it for precisely some of the reasons I talked about earlier. We met with the delegation. We convinced the delegation that we would make every attempt to keep that campus open. The concern was draining resources from Middlesex to Meriden. When I came into the system, we found a solution, and we partnered with the local high school and the superintendent to be able to provide the services in the high school and give the

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superintendent some seats through dual enrollment, to do that.

So, I think that there were mistakes made in the ways that the conversations were had with the legislature in anticipation of announcing a closure of a satellite which was very important to the delegation at the time. I have always said that these satellites need to be in some ways self-sustaining, right? That it's very, very useful to have these satellites where they are. As a matter of fact, we've just enhanced our offerings in Bristol as part of Tunxis, which is doing a great job. Senator Flexer and I have had conversations about Willimantic and about the need to find a different location to be able to serve the population in Willimantic. So, these things, you know, are important. As I said, there's no prescribed policy in place right now for closing an institution because we have made a commitment not to do that.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you for your response. As we were having this conversation, I just, you know, was recalling that kerfuffle, I guess is the word for it. My second question relates to the only bill that I really didn't talk about very much earlier, which is 5112 regarding the budget, and I appreciate that you've come here today and sort of not opposed it. But I did just want to ask you a couple of questions about it.

Because I think that, you know, many folks who aren't very familiar with the way that the budget works for the BOR are sometimes surprised to learn, you know, exactly what the process is. We budget a

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block grant to the community colleges and a block grant to the state university system, and there's a line item, as well, for Charter Oak State College, right? And your Board allocates those block grants among the institutions, and you also assess those institutions for what's essentially for the services that are provided by the BOR to those campuses. That's basically?

MARK OJAKIAN: Correct.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): So, I mean, this bill would add as a line item or budget within your budget the expenses that are spent for at the Central Office for the system and I think give the General Assembly the ability to have a little bit more clarity from our perspective for where the money that we're appropriating is actually being spent. Right? So, and we know that there is block-granted money that we allocate to the community college or to the Central or to the CSU's institutions that eventually gets spent at Woodland Street, right?

And, so this is an attempt, I think to sort of provide some additional clarity from our perspective about where those public dollars are being spent. We know that they're being spent on Woodland Street because there are personnel who work at Woodland Street who are added to the list of personnel that are essentially charged off to the Comptroller's budget, and, so, we know that it's block-granted money that's being spent at Woodland Street.

But, you know, as I was looking through the bill, I was just looking at lines 52 through 58. I don't know if you have the bill right in front of you, but this is a section of the legislation that I think

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adds to sort of the confusion that I have about how all this works and its existing language in the law that says that the Board of Trustees of each constituent units may transfer to or from any specific appropriation of such constituent unit a sum or sums totaling up to \$50,000 dollars or 10 percent of such specific appropriation, whichever is less, in any fiscal year without the consent of the Finance Advisory Committee. And it goes on to say one other thing about the transfers that are less than \$50,000 dollars should be reported to the Finance Advisory Committee.

So, despite that that language exists, I want to just -- it's like it's been your practice not to consider that transfer of money from the constituent units to be spent at Woodland Street as being a transfer that would trigger this kind of approval or notification. Is that essentially correct?

MARK OJAKIAN: What I would say in response to that, Representative, is this is language that was left over from the old legacy boards of trustees, and, so, there's a lot of language in here -- for example, I noticed when reading through our statutory responsibility that we have some control over independent colleges in here that, I think, was left over from the old Board of Governors legislation.

This was meant, if I'm reading this correctly, to talk about the Boards of Trustees of the constituent units when there was a board for the community colleges, a board for the state universities, and a board for Charter Oak. So, we have not interpreted this as applying to the Board of Regents.

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REP. HADDAD (54TH): I'm sorry, not Secretary Barnes anymore but Chief Financial Officer Barnes.

BEN BARNES: I've read this statute, and I believe that this statute would come into play if the Board of Regents wished to transfer block grant funds from the community colleges to Charter Oak, as an example, or to, you know, the university system for whatever reason. It's hard to imagine that they would want to do that, although Charter Oak is very small, and if there was some exigency at Charter Oak, the Board of Regents might say, well we'll give some reserves from the community college system to address an emergency. I'm not saying they would do that, but it's conceivable. That would require following the procedure in this statute; up to \$50,000 could be done by action of the Board of Regents, and above that would have to go to FAC because the FAC governs transfers amongst line items at the level of appropriation of the state budget.

We believe that the actions -- the way that this is -- I don't believe that this has bearing on the spending of community college or CSU resources on activities at Woodland Street, as you describe, because those activities are being undertaken on behalf of the community colleges. So, you've appropriated funds for the community colleges, and some of that is spent on instruction in classrooms at the community colleges; some of it is spent on administrative duties, those take place at those community colleges and, in some cases, a growing number of cases, at the System Office on Woodland Street. But we do not believe that we could use the community college block grant as an example for

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support of anything other than the community colleges, and we don't believe that we do that now.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): No, I thank you for that explanation, and I appreciate, you know, the attempt to address the concern I'm trying to raise. Do you have personnel at the Central Office that provide assistance to both community colleges and the state universities?

BEN BARNES: Yes, I am among them.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): I mean the threshold is relatively low, and my understanding is that the budget, if you were to try to parse it out, and you've done that for us on the subcommittee, is \$47 million dollars, give or take. And, so, I guess I'm wondering how certain you can be that you're not exceeding the threshold of \$50,000 dollars, given, you know, that the allocation of staff that's providing services to both the CSU system and also the community college system are the same. You know, \$47 million dollars is a substantial amount of money. It's a significant portion of what we allocate to the two, and like I understand that your intentions -- I wouldn't doubt that your intention would never be to take money that's sort of assessed against the community colleges and spend it through the CSU system, but I imagine that that accounting at the Central Office is going to be quite difficult for you to have certainty that you're not assessing a little bit too much from the community college system and a little bit too less from CSU system or vice versa, for any person that's providing shared services.

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MARK OJAKIAN: I think, Representative, if we're talking about the \$50,000 dollar threshold, I think to just echo what Ben said, it's if we were taking money from the community college block grant and giving it to the university block grant, for example. But that when we assess how much it costs to run the system based on the services we provide to either the universities or to the community colleges, that is a very intricate sort of formula by which we, you know, have money transferred into the system. And as I indicated in the testimony, I was pointing out some overall challenges we have in forecasting our budget, given the time we have to go to OPM when it's not in line with our enrollment cycle. So, like I said, happy to continue to talk to you about this, but we didn't come here to propose it today.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): No, I appreciate that, I do. And I think that there's probably some change in the way that we think about the budgets and the way we budget for the system that may provide a bit more clarity to the General Assembly and really not get in the way of what you're trying to do in the system, but it might actually enhance your arguments.

And one last question, and it relates to this question and budget reserved. You currently have budget reserves for each individual institution, and I get that largely from what I gathered from our previous conversations, these are paper calculations. It's not as though there's a bank account someplace that's separate for each institution. But, nonetheless, you have a calculation for what the budget reserve is for each

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individual institution, whether it is collectively for the community colleges and also for the CSU system. It would not be your intention to spend -- do you segregate the reserves at the Central Office that you've collected between reserves for the community colleges as separate from the CSU system?

MARK OJAKIAN: Yes, we do, and Ben can provide -- we provided those to you in the subcommittee, but Ben can --

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Yeah, I just wanted to -- and so this wouldn't be a common practice or a desire to spend any money that you hold in reserve from one set of institutions on the other set of institutions?

MARK OJAKIAN: Correct.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Right, okay. Thank you. This probably merits some additional conversation outside of this hearing.

MARK OJAKIAN: Sure.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): I'm going -- we're very close to being done, but I will ask if there are any additional questions for -- yes, Representative Hall.

REP. HALL (59TH): Thank you for your indulgence. I'm sorry. These are really quick questions. So, in regard to H.B. 5114, you had said something, Mark, that kind of perked my ears when you said that you presently offer the opportunity to Board members to apprise themselves to a lot of these things that are listed in the bill. And I just want to clarify when you say opportunity, is there a level of

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requirements in that opportunity because obviously the bill says requires. So, just a point of clarification.

MARK OJAKIAN: Yes. No, that is correct. When a new Board member is appointed and goes through the legislative process and is confirmed, then there is a requirement that they come in and they have a certain amount of training on the number of items that I gave in my written testimony.

REP. HALL (59TH): Okay, thank you for that. And, just one more quick question. With NECHE approval of the merger, do they also look at, or have approval and oversight, of the Central Office piece of it, or is it just the academic portion of the month.

MARK OJAKIAN: They have oversight over the whole new institution. So, if we're talking about Central Office, we need to separate the CSCU system office, right, which is over all of the 17 institutions, and the new One College administration. So, they will be approving the entire institution from the administration to the academic piece to the finances to the governance piece. They have nine standards, I believe, that they look at for the entire new institution including the new college office.

REP. HALL (59TH): Okay, thank you. That's it. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MARK OJAKIAN: You're welcome.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. You've made -- you're within the half an hour to Scranton.

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MARK OJAKIAN: I'm dumbfounded. Thank you, Senator.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): So, you just stopped at the McDonald's on the way to Scranton, and you're free. Thank you. Somewhere amidst all these papers, I have a sign-up list, and if you give me a moment, I will find it. Here it is. The next person on the sign-up list for the public list is Maureen Chalmers, followed by Patty O'Neill. Ms. Chalmers, thank you for your patience awaiting for the public portion of this public hearing to start. If you'd introduce yourself to the committee and proceed.

MAUREEN CHALMERS: Okay. My name is Maureen Chalmers, and I'm the president of the Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges which represents the full and part-time faculty and the professional staff of the community colleges. The first thing I'd like to say is I appreciate the thoughtfulness of your questions that you posed to me and to the people I represent. It's an indication that you have been listening to us in regard to our concerns about the plans that are going forward, in particular, with the consolidation but in other areas, as well.

I'm here to speak in regard to the several bills that have been brought forward, S.B. 104, H.B. 5112, H.B. 5113, and H.B. 5114. I have been the president of this wonderful union for under a year now, and this is my first opportunity to speak to people on the Board, so I hope that you recognize that my nerve levels may be higher because I have been proceeded by a person who's a very talented individual who has years of experience in dealing with this, and I hope that I'm able to answer any

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questions that you have regarding these issues that we're bringing forward.

I want to speak to several different areas that you have brought forward, in regard particularly that is something that is very important to the faculty and professional staff is H.B. 113. Prior to our merger with the state universities, our Board of Trustees, if they were to make decisions regarding a closure or a consolidation, they were to do so with the consent of the legislature. As an individual who's lived in this state proudly all my life and has voted in every single election, I look to the people who serve in the legislative capacity as those people who make decisions in regard to things as important as the asset of the community colleges.

Prior to this consolidation, NECHE and then the previous name for it which was NEASC, they had no problem with having the legislature involved in the decision-making process, and I am at a loss to understand why this would make a difference now. I appreciate the fact that the legislature is aware that perhaps they gave away too much of their authority and their responsibility by affording this to a Board of Regents and to a government appointee. So, if you had questions in regard to that, I want to let you know that we didn't just have 1000 people or 1500 people or 2000 thousand people sign petitions. What's more compelling and more important is that 11 of our 12 college senates have voted in opposition to the plan as it's being put forward today. And the one institution that has not voted on it is my institution. We're the smallest college, and we're concerned that our ability to

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stay alive if we voted in opposition to this that we would have a target on us. So, I heard the bell.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Yeah, we typically ask members of the public to try to make their main points in three minutes so we have lots of time for questions, but if you want to go through one or two points, that would be welcome.

MAUREEN CHALMERS: I appreciated the fact that you brought up the concerns about the Meriden and the Willimantic campus closings. Those were very serious issues that we were concerned about because those were developed by our institutions in order to meet the needs of minority individuals. We brought our campuses to the community even more than our community name says. And that was done by an appointee, and fortunately we were able to consider a way to fix that.

President Ojakian brought up the fact that we have difficulties where students may have an individual problem with being able to sign up for a course at another campus, and that does not require a consolidation in order to solve. We have means by which an individual could take a course at another campus. This individual reached out to the president of the system as he could, but that individual could have also reached out to their own campus, and they could have created a communication between the two campuses.

Another issue that I have a concern about, as well, is how is the money being spent. As I said, I'm from the smallest institution, Northwestern Connecticut Community College, the small college that does great things but can't have our library

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open after 4:30 three nights a week, and they close at 8 o'clock. I've been in classes that have been temporarily at the library in order to provide how to use a library resource systems and the internet software that we provide students, and the class goes from 6:30 until 9:30, but starting at 7:30, the computers that the students are using are telling them, "wind it up, get ready, get out, save your stuff, you've got to be out."

And think of the difficulties we have in providing students the resources that are promised to everybody in the state. Every person is supposed to have that. My college is \$220,000 dollars in the hole, but our FTEs are up. It's a frustration when we know that the system office is amassing funds for a potential change in the future when we can't provide our current services to our current students. There's a great frustration.

And I think you've asked a lot of the same questions that we've been asking for three years now, and one of the questions is, you know, well, what's the alternative? We haven't come up with a grand plan that says what should be done, but we have given components. We've suggested change, but we don't have a state-wide governance system in order to make those changes heard. The little committees are focusing on different components of this, and I don't think we need to have a full-blown change in order to recognize the savings.

We currently have discussions right now about changing the recording structure for the IT staff at all 12 community colleges. That doesn't have to happen in one college. We are a system. It could

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be a system resource. My campus has a veterinary technology program which has its own facilities, and at two other campuses they have veterinary technology services, but they are housed out in the community where the courses are occurring part on campus but a large part of what happens happens in individual veterinary hospitals. The accreditations for those two institutions have to be different, but we're being pressure to change our accreditation which will not satisfy our accreditors. I mean, we spent a fortune to build the facility in order to meet the needs of our accreditors, and now we're being told we have to change our curriculum which will now force those individuals to be different.

We would love to have common core, and there's no difficulty with that, and I've spoken with many of the wonderful people who are from our campuses that are now housed at the System Office. And one of the concerns that they have is there are 407 different programs that we offer, and there's no problem making those things happen when there're 12 colleges, but if we're one system, it's difficult. So, we're being told we have to make them 200. If we had focused more of our time and energy to make our prerequisites similar, we would have been able to do much more effective work on behalf of our students than what we are currently spending our time on in regard to making it 200 programs.

And I know there was a statement made earlier about the paralegal program at Manchester and the paralegal program at Norwalk. Those two different programs were created not in isolation but in connection with our communities at those sites that they serve, and each one of those programs

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effectively meets the needs of the community as they were designed collaboratively with the community.

One of the problems we have with my tiny college in the Northwest corner in Winsted is that our business program is being pressured to change using the Norwalk model of how their curriculum is. One of the courses that's being projected is not necessary for people in our community to be successful entrepreneurs and business people, but there are individuals -- I mean, we wouldn't even know where to find a person to teach the course that is required at Norwalk to be presented in our area. The person in charge of the businesses says I have no idea how we going to find a faculty person. Maybe we'll find one person, and maybe we'll be able to offer the course once a year. We hope that that meets the needs of students who come in the day and come in the night, and it's a day that is available to them and in a semester that they need it to happen. I mean there's a lot of difficulty that we as individual community colleges face, and having to answer to the BOR about what our curricular needs are and how we schedule our programs and things like that is going to make it more difficult for us to be responsive to our community colleges. So, those are my comments that I have off the top of my head.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you for your comments. I wanted to ask you, we had a dialogue just then with Ben Barnes and Mark Ojakian about the way that we budget for the system where we allocate money in a block grant to the community colleges and another one to the CSU colleges and universities, and then another line item for the state. But is it your understanding, as well, that -- I mean, I don't know

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if it's in addition to or is part of that, but are personnel from the community colleges sometimes assigned or temporarily assigned to the Central Office, and what considerations do you feel are currently being given to the individual institutions needs as they start plucking folks out of individual institutions to work at Woodland Street?

MAUREEN CHALMERS: There are individuals from our campuses that have expertise that is very beneficial to changes that we might want to have happen across the system. I know of seven people from my bargaining unit that are working collaboratively on Pathways and many of the other issues that have been brought up as cost-saving measures. These individuals have expertise, and they are working there.

And we're currently working on our IT positions. They are currently now all answering directly to the BOR, and that may make sense business-wise. It's going to slow down response to our campuses as we need, and campuses that may have a particular urgency, rather than having it dealt with on the campus, will then have it go up to the BOR to a committee of IT people who will then give it a ranking compared to the other campuses needs. So, what once used to occur at the campus and could be expedited very quickly and prioritized as our communities need, it's going to be going up through the BOR.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you for that response. The reason why I asked that question, I guess, is because I was out at a state university, it was at Eastern, and some students were telling me that they

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were having difficulty getting some transcript requests filled because when they went to that office, that person had been temporarily reassigned, on a part-time basis in this case, to Woodland Street. So, in this case it was what I would consider to be a front-facing student resource.

MAUREEN CHALMERS: Yes, there are front-facing positions that are being changed. On my campus, the financial aid officer, which is actually a title that the federal government's financial aid department uses, our individual retired, and now that position is being filled by a person many, many ranks below. He is doing an exceptionally good job at doing it, but we don't have the same number of people who would be dealing with the students because that individual now is taking over responsibilities that are no longer, you know, in that title range.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. Are there other members who have questions for Ms. Chalmers?  
Representative Hall.

REP. HALL (59TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a really quick question. What has the communication been when you, you know, kind of bring up your concerns with the Central Office or the BOR? What is the -- I guess, what my main question is reactive to your concerns. Obviously you feel like there're some things lacking that wouldn't have been lacking in the original system that we had set up. So, what have you gotten as far as feedback from Central Office and the BOR as far as reactionary to your concerns?

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MAUREEN CHALMERS: I haven't spoken directly with people within the BOR. I have communicated with people who are serving on the various committees that are being reported. There is a report that there are 400-plus people who are happily participating in this change to our system. There are people who for three semesters have not participated, and nobody has made any comment to the fact that they stopped coming because they recognized that their input was being ignored.

And then there are those individuals who are fighting tooth and nail because they still have hope that maybe they could protect their curriculum as it stands, as it's needed by our community, and they fear that if they step off the committee that the change that they fear most will be the one that's chosen. So, we're looking at things that are important to accreditation, faculty participation, and the creation of a curriculum, and as a community college professional, it's not just the faculty, but we want our community participation in the creation of our programs.

But we also have an important component that NECHE expects, and that is a governance structure that works. We're being put through this without a governance structure to do it by. We have 12 separate institutions, and it has not been made a priority to create a statewide governance structure in order for these issues to be addressed. Everything is happening separately. So, it's almost like a cart before the horse. You know, the most effective way would have been to create a governance structure, and the next thing would be is to recognize that 407 programs that have been designed

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were designed with a specific purpose for the communities that we serve. We would love to see our communities participate in some of these decisions because they were not created in a vacuum.

REP. HALL (59TH): Thank you. Thank you for the answer. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Are there any additional questions? Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your testimony and bringing up a lot of common sense discussions on this. I want to go over the IT issue because I happened to come across an instructor/professor, and she had talked about presenting her class, and her IT equipment went down, ready to serve the students. And we're talking Students First here, and this is an issue that she brings up. She goes, "We're talking Students First, and my presentation for that class should have been a top priority." Unfortunately, it wasn't even a priority through the IT process that they're going through now in terms of recording to get response to come serve that classroom. Is that kind of what you brought up just a moment ago?

MAUREEN CHALMERS: There are difficulties. I can speak, you know, from personal experience at my college that for our night classes which are where most of our students attend because they work by day and look to better themselves through higher education in the evening, we have between 6:30 and 7 as a window of time for you to know whether your software and your SMART Board and all of that is working because at 7 o'clock, that individual that is a part of the IT program goes away. Now that may

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be different in larger institutions; they may have more resources to have people there at night, but it shouldn't change the fact that my college's students should be treated equally as others.

So, we're looking at a ticketing program where you type into the computer that I need help, and that ticket comes up on someone's board. I'm a Luddite in the worst sense of the term. I have people here to make sure that I know how to turn my phone on at times. So, I don't even know how to explain in a ticket what's wrong with my computer, but we have people who are adjuncts, many of them teaching at night, who have all of their curriculum planned to present to the class on a SMART Board, and if a system goes down, the resources should be on the campus where the students are. I mean if I'm going to make a fine point on this, rather than contracting these services into a building that has no students, these resources should be pushed out onto the campuses where the students exist and where the faculty and the professional staff need it. We don't need to have it housed in a silo, and the decision-making process should be done collaboratively across the system, but it was done collaboratively before, and we were able to accomplish great things as the way it was designed before.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you. Thank you for that answer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. Are there any additional questions? Seeing none. Thank you very much for your testimony.

MAUREEN CHALMERS: Thank you very much.

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REP. HADDAD (54TH): Patty O'Neill followed by Kari Swanson. Good afternoon.

PATTY O'NEILL: Good afternoon, Representative Haddad, Senator Flexer, Representative Hall, and members of the committee. My name is Patty O'Neill, and I'm president of the Connecticut State University American Association of University Professors. I'm an associate professor of psychology at Western, and I was a member of the Faculty Advisory Committee from 2012 to 2015. I urge passage of House Bill 5112, 5113, and Senate Bill 104. I'm going to give you my reasons.

Since the merger in 2011, the system has been beset by turmoil. We've had five presidents in eight years. The system has been subjected to misguided plans to "transform it." First there was Excel CT. I don't know if you remember that, which was renamed to Transform 2020 because that sounds less like a spreadsheet. And now there is the consolidation plan known as Students First. This plan promises to save millions annually by cutting deeply into what are already austerity budgets for the colleges and while it's doing this, it's going to improve graduation and retention rates, increase enrollment, and close the racial achievement gap.

This plan is promising quite a lot, but so far hasn't delivered on any of these promises. CSU AAUP has long been concerned about this consolidation plan and the implications. We've been assured that there is no reason for concern because "it doesn't affect you." President Ojakian told me that two years ago. He has continued to say that, and that's just wrong. It affects students at the community

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colleges, and they transfer to the universities; so, that's an effect. It affects us because we share the same Board or Regents which with this plan is attempting to wrestle away curricular matters from faculty members. It affects us because decisions to claw back funding from the individual institutions for the System Office will inevitably affect those institutions including the universities. Any risks to the accreditation of individual colleges will irreparably damage the reputation of the CSCU system. So, yes, it does affect us.

These bills do many different things, but they share two things in common -- holding the System Office accountable and creating transparency. It may be the case that the Students First plan is awesome, but even if the Students First plan manages to somehow stumble over the finish line, it's still a laudable goal to increase the transparency of this public agency. So, that's why I am favor of those.

And, I've kind of shortened my remarks, but I have two more things to say. With respect to your question about how has the System Office responded to our concerns, well, I've been told it doesn't affect you, so why are you even talking about this. There has been an attempt, I would say, to paint the people who are raising concerns about this consolidation plan as it's just a small group of disgruntled people who are afraid of change. Change certainly is uncomfortable, but that's not what our disagreements are about. Representative Haskell, you mentioned the situation at Eastern. That's a perfect example where resources from individual institutions are being transferred to the System Office, and I guess one of the questions I have is

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who's paying that individual? Is the University still paying for that individual to then work at the System Office? We don't know. So, I think transparency and accountability are things that we should strive for. Thank you.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. Are there questions by members of the committee for Ms. O'Neill? I'll just ask one, and it gets at -- I think like a broader question about the responsiveness of the Board of Regents to individual institutions. I'm just curious to know if you feel like since the merger, since you raised it, your concern is actually much larger than anything that might be happening right now.

As I understand it, it's really one that goes back to the decision in 2011 to merge under a single Board of Regents 17 different institutions under their purview. And I'm curious to know what your perspective is as a long-time employee, as a member of the union, about how the relationship might have changed between the Governing Board and each institution.

PATTY O'NEILL: Prior to the merger, I can only speak for the universities. Prior to the merger, I would say that there was a much closer relationship between the Board of Trustees and the faculty members at the various institutions. Like, they would hold meetings once a semester on each campus, in which these were meetings where the trustees would attend, and union folks would attend -- not just AAUP but all the unions. And now we don't have that relationship any longer. And I don't think that a single regent has ever visited Western. I

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don't know about the other universities, but there's a bit distance now where there didn't used to be that distance, and I would say that has worsened the relationship between faculty and the Board of Regents. So, does that answer your question?

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Yeah, I think it does. I mean, if it bleeds into the bills that were in front of us right now because the question about how concerns are being heard and addressed, I think frequently are a question of what is the relationship between the people who are making the decisions and the people expressing their concern. And, so, I mean I am sympathetic to the idea broadly that, you know, it's a very hard task to ask voluntary members of the Board of Regents to maintain that kind of relationship not just with four institutions as it as with your previous board but 17 different institutions. Maybe that will be easier with six if the merge the institutions, but even if they have a relationship with the system of community colleges, they'll still be challenged to serve and have a relationship with individual character and personality of each community college. That's just a challenge, I think, that we created when we put the system into the single board, and I think it certainly seems to me like it's having an impact as we have this conversation now.

PATTY O'NEILL: I would agree. I think the sheer size of the system that was created in 2011 was perhaps not necessarily thought about in terms of just logistical things like the regents getting to know the individual institutions. You're absolutely right. Seventeen institutions is a lot. If they just visited one per semester, that would take,

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what, over eight years. So, yeah, the sheer size was something, I think, maybe not considered.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. Are there any additional questions from members of the committee? Seeing none, we'll move on. Thank you very much for your testimony. Kari Swanson followed by Jen Widness.

KARI SWANSON: Hi, Senator Haskell, Representative Haddad. I know Senator Haskell's not here. Distinguished members of the committee. My name is Kari Swanson, and I am a librarian at the Hilton C. Buley Library at Southern Connecticut State University. I'm here to speak in favor of legislation that will enhance credibility, accountability, and transparency of the CSCU system. In particular, I think it's critically important that members of our governing body receive training to give them appropriate information and understanding of our student's programs, services, and, priorities. The regents are responsible for setting tuition, approving programs, and prioritizing other resource allocation in our system, and this training will increase credibility of the Board.

In my work as a collection, development, and acquisitions librarian, I must take into consideration the mission of my institution, the curriculum, the learning needs of our students, and the research and teaching needs of our faculty when making recommendations and decisions about our collections and services. I believe that it is important for our regents to be equally well informed when they make decisions that affect our

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students and arguably the future of not only our institutions but our state. Thank you.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. You get extra points for providing some brief and concise testimony; we appreciate that. Are there questions by members of the committee? Seeing none, we'll move on. Thank you very much for sharing your perspective. Jen Widness followed by Stephen [something that didn't get translated in the photostatic copy], but if he's here, yes, right; it'll be you after Jen. Ms. Widness, welcome.

JEN WIDNESS: Good afternoon. I'm Jen Widness, and I'm president of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges. Representative Smith, I don't think we've had a chance to meet yet. I work with the fifteen private nonprofit colleges in Connecticut. I'm here to talk on H.B. 5114, AN ACT REQUIRING TRAINING FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BOARDS OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE. You've heard about this bill a bit already today, but I just want to be sure everyone understands the bill both requires training, but it articulates what the training has to be on, and there're 15 topics at a minimum that boards must be trained on under the bill. And then it requires institutions to report back to the Higher Education committee about that training, the policies adopted, and then annually have to report back to the committee that the training's been completed each calendar year in some form or another.

So, while CCIC appreciates the intent of this bill and understands and is committed to the importance of having a strong training program for our board of

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directors, some of our members really have some strong concerns about this bill. A few schools have submitted written testimony, and others are expressing their concerns today. All of our member institutions take this issue seriously. Their onboarding programs for board members are extensive, and training is ongoing. We all understand that having a well-informed and well-trained board is critical for the overall health of an institution. Further, all of these institutions in our membership are regionally accredited.

As Mark Ojakian articulated earlier, NECHE has guidelines around boards of directors, and, so their five and 10-year-interval assessments by NECHE include a review and assessment of the institutions governing board, its function, and its effectiveness. No other state in the country actually mandates board training for private colleges except for Massachusetts, and, in fact, Wisconsin, I just noted, actually has a statute prohibiting state intrusion in the policies and governance of independent colleges. So, in closing, we appreciate your support of our sector. We work with you regularly on a lot of different issues. Our opposition to this bill stems in large part from a concern about insulating the governance of independent colleges and universities from political influence, and, for this reason, we believe that restraint in establishing directives about governing boards of private entities is the best course for this state. So, happy to answer any questions on this. Thank you.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. I have one or two just. Can you tell me the requirement that there be

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board training in Massachusetts was passed last year or the year before?

JEN WIDNESS: In the fall.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): In the fall. What led to the passage of that requirement in Massachusetts?

JEN WIDNESS: I'm so pleased that you asked this question. So, in Massachusetts they just passed a comprehensive bill around sort of monitoring the fiscal health of institutions of higher education, and it came about due to the sudden closure of Mount Ida College. First the language in the Massachusetts statute actually -- it requires board training for public and private colleges, but it's very different language for both. So, the public college boards have a like a laundry list like this bill does for the public colleges, and for the private colleges, it includes like two or three things around fiscal health that the private college boards in Massachusetts are now required to undergo training.

But, in addition, I just wanted to make sure the committee members understood that part of that legislation requires an annual fiscal screen of private colleges in Massachusetts, and that action is going to be delegated to NECHE. So, the accreditor in Massachusetts that our school and my membership are approved by is going to require that independent colleges in Massachusetts annually undergo like a stress test on fiscal health. And this year, they're going to mandate that for all private colleges.

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So, you know, I just was communicating with Barbara Brittingham about when that vote's going to take place. It'll take place in March or April, so all the private colleges in Connecticut will be required to go under that fiscal stress test annually, just like the Massachusetts are mandated to do by statute. So, I guess I would just say is that screen didn't exist when Mount Ida closed, when that catastrophe occurred, and I think, you know, NECHE has really stepped up to take a leadership role in preventing that from happening. So, presumably, as schools go through that stress test, boards will be alerted of those challenges, and, so, again, I understand your concern and the need for board training, but I don't think that this language is going to cause a change in action. I think that the work that NECHE is doing is really going to help engage and inform boards about what's taking place in their institutions. I just worry honestly about the reporting requirements, like our schools don't have a robust staff that manages a lot of this stuff, and there're a lot of bills this year that have reporting requirements, and, so, I think we just sort of need to pick and choose.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you for that response. One last question which is just when an independent college -- if an independent college were to close, is there an impact on state government. Like, doesn't state government become the holder of the records and have a responsibility to follow through with certain responsibilities in the absence of an institution if it, unfortunately, were to fail?

JEN WIDNESS: I don't know the exact rules. I know that the recordkeeping, having a plan for

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recordkeeping is required in most states, and I'll have to get back to you about what the rule is in Connecticut. So, in Connecticut we had a closure, but, you know, Goodwin College stepped up and took care of a lot of that and assumed a lot of those programs. So, it was different from Mount Ida, the way that that was. They did the teach-out right, and then we've had a merger with Saint Vincent's College and Sacred Heart. So, I just don't know the policy on that off the top of my head, but I'll look into it.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. I remember I called over to the Office of Higher Education the day shortly after that closure was announced and was told that while they could answer my question, they were all in jeans and sweatshirts physically driving to the location and ready to box up those records and bring them back to the state. My understanding is that it's the state that becomes responsible for following through with the transcript requests. There might be a teach-out requirement, I think, but it may be that that happens only in the case of a sudden failure as opposed to, you know, something that's planned where the records can be -- you would find an entity that's willing to take those records. Thank you very much for your testimony. I appreciate it. Are there any other questions by members of the committee?

JEN WIDNESS: And I would just say that I think the NECHE, the policy change and the shift that's taking place there, I think it's really intended to limit the number of schools that would suddenly close overnight, presumably, right? I mean, so I think that some folks may have been caught off guard by

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what's happened in Mass. and Vermont, but, you know, I think the policies are changing on that.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): And I'm grateful that our institutions in Connecticut seem to have been strong enough to weather the decline in enrollment and some of the other challenges that are being faced by those institutions in Massachusetts, for one reason or another, just weren't capable of handling. And I think that speaks well of our higher education community in Connecticut. We just want to make sure that that continues to stay the same. So, thank you very much for your testimony. Any additional questions? Thank you. Stephen, you'll have to announce your last name; it got blacked out on the testimony, followed by Dennis Boguski.

STEPHEN MONROE TOMCZAK: My name is Stephen Monroe Tomczak. I am a faculty member and chapter president of AAUP at Southern Connecticut State University. Good afternoon, distinguished members of the Higher Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. I am here to ask that you pass S.B. 104 which improves the financial transparency of the Students First plan, H.B. 5112 which seeks to establish more transparent and itemized budget for the Board of Regents, H.B. 5114 which requires training for governing boards of higher education institutions in Connecticut, and H.B. 5113 which requires legislative approval for the merger or closing of institutions within the CSCU system.

The community college consolidation plan, or as it is euphemistically called, Students First, was announced in the spring of 2017 as a grand plan to

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save the system \$24 million dollars a year. However, since that time, System Office costs have skyrocketed to more than \$46 million dollars a year -- all without educating a single student. Imagine how many students could really be put first if that \$46 million was, in fact, directly applied to students' educational costs. At the February Board of Regents meeting, President Ojakian claimed Students First saved \$11 million so far. However, as no clear accounting was given for these savings, it is assumed they stemmed from faculty and staff retirements and attrition rather than from actual savings from his plan.

As you know, public higher education receives a block grant application which is crucial to our operations and to academic freedom. However, the BOR which doesn't educate a single student receives its own block grant of approximately \$400,000 dollars. Yet, in fiscal year 20, the Board of Regents spent over \$47 million. The BOR should not have supreme authority to spend what the legislature appropriated to the colleges and universities, especially considering the already anemic budgets under which these institutions must operation. Revoking the BOR's authority to allocate money away from the institutions would increase financial transparency in the CSU budget. The Board of Regents in seen largely as a rubberstamp for whatever scheme the current president of the system deems appropriate.

However, to be an effective board member of any organization, training should be provided for these appointees. Board members hail from all walks of life, and few have any direct knowledge of the

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intricacies and nuances of public higher education. To be effective as a board member, training in public higher education should be a requirement and could help increase the credibility of the Board of Regents.

In the past, President Ojakian has stated if savings are not found, the system will face closures. However, well paid deans, CEOs, and vice presidents continue to be hired continued to be hired, further padding the layers of bureaucracy. In the past, the General Assembly has had oversight of mergers and closures of higher education institutions, and, so, if a closure is proposed, the public would want to have their voices heard to be able to hold public officials accountable. For all of these reasons, I urge you to put the students and public higher education truly first by passing these transparency and accountability bills out of the Higher Education Committee. Thank you for your time today, and I apologize for going slightly over.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you very much. We appreciate your testimony. Are there any questions for Mr. Monroe Tomczak? See none. Thank you.

STEPHEN MONROE TOMCZAK: Thank you again.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Dennis Boguski followed by Phil Mayer.

DENNIS BOGUSKI: Members of the Higher Education Committee. It's been a long time since I've been at one of these hearings. I've been with the system. But, let me introduce myself. My name is Dennis Boguski. I'm the President of the Federation of Technical Colleges. We represent the faculty at

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five of the merged community colleges as a result of a merger in 1992, which I was very intimate with, and I spent a lot of time in the legislature. I'm also a faculty member at Norwalk Community College. I run the International Student Program which brings in approximately 400 international students a year and a heck of a lot of revenue to the State of Connecticut because they pay twice the rate of an in-state student. So, we bring quite a bit of revenue in, and we have students from almost every country in the world here. And with the amount that we have, we say give me a country, and I'll say I can give you at least two names. It's almost like going into New Haven and saying give me an ethnic restaurant, and I can give you at least three.

So, I've been with the system going on 40 years, and it actually may well be 40 years. I've seen a lot of changes. I've been a part of change, and what's going on right now is not a positive change. So, what am I here for today? I'm here to urge your support of the bills that are here, House Bill 5113, an act requiring the legislative approval for closings or mergers of institutions. And the reality here is that this proposal in front of the legislature is just good business. It assures for healthy and reasoned discussions before any of these extreme, and let's face it, taking 12 institutions and collapsing them into one is an extreme action. It's not casual; it's extreme. Let's call it what it is.

And it would give back, by you folks passing this bill, it would give back your authority -- authority that you once had, authority that you had in 1992 when you merged, actually in '89 when you did the

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first merger, though, between the community and technical colleges that was a board-level merger; in 1992, an institutional merger which creates those five merged campuses amongst the other 12; so, 17 to five. But that was your authority, and this bill gives you back your authority. In 2011, when the two systems were merged, the state university system and the community college system, that somehow got left out of that legislation, and that by default gave that authority to the Board of Regents. What we're asking for is that you get it back.

And why should you have it back. Because you represent the taxpayers of the state, and as I represent my members of the union, you are going to do the bidding of the state taxpayer, and I do the bidding of our unions. And that's important that you have it back. And it's not a difference between a fine line of oversight and approval. Approval's necessary in this case, and maybe the legislature; in fact, we suggest this legislature is the place to fight this out and to have these healthy and reasoned discussions, not just a one-way discussion that's being represented here -- [bell ringing] did I really go that long?

Not what's been represented here is 400 happy people out of a few thousand people that are working on committees, which is entirely not the way it is. Not represented that only 10 percent have withdrawn from these committees. People have withdrawn three semesters ago, and why did they withdraw? Because they weren't being heard. They said they were part of committees that the end is already prescribed. So, what are we doing here? We're window-dressing; that's all we're doing here. And yes, there are

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some folks that, as Maureen said, are hanging on because they're trying to salvage integrity of programs. They're trying to have their voices heard, but there aren't 400 happy people.

And that's one of the reasons the unions are involved in this. We got involved in this later in the game. This started out as a grassroots effort from faculty, from retirees, retired presidents, and retired administrators of this system, and this is how it all started out. And we just got into the game. And why did we just get into the game? Because we felt, as I think most of you have evaluated, things need to come from the grassroots, not top down. And I'll say that again; it came from the grassroots. We were asked to get involved, and we got involved. In some senses it doesn't affect their contracts at the moment, at least mine. It doesn't have much immediate effect. It will have an impact in the future.

So, again, I think this is probably -- all of these bills are important. This is the most important, and it's you folks retaining your authority and what's rightfully yours, what the taxpayers in the state elected you to do; to have some authority and to have some control. And, again, you're talking about a system of community colleges that started in the '60s. You're talking about a system of state universities that's been around for a lot longer than that, and that's very important.

I also would urge you to support the training bill; just to summarize on that -- look, we educate students, and we give them the tools to function whether it be to transfer to a four-year institution

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or to go into the workforce. Let's give our trustees tools so they can adequately be trustees. Let's give them all the resources and tools. So, I urge your support.

In terms of the budget, yeah, somebody's turned around and said the System Office budget is \$400,000 dollars. Yet they spent in the last fiscal year \$47 million dollars. Are these numbers wrong? Is the math wrong here? I don't think so. And this came off the campuses. This came off Northwestern where we close the library and we kick the kids out. This came off each of the campuses where faculty positions weren't refilled. According to the system's own reports in the last year, 80 faculty positions were not filled; 80 faculty positions. That's a lot of positions, but yet we have growth in the Central Office. We have now regional presidents where we still have existing presidents that are called CEOs, so when we hear where we're collapsing two into one, that's not necessarily true. We're taking one, and we're making it into two and three in some cases, and, believe me, we're not hiring them at minimum wage. We're hiring them at very good salaries consistent with what was already there. Maybe that explains some of the \$47 million dollars. And when you say, how do we get savings, and we're going to produce savings, what are we going to do? Fire all of these people that were hired and put in the Central Office because there's \$47 million dollars that's out there. We've got to get those savings somehow, and that's it.

And lastly, I want to respond to this whole concept of governance which hasn't happened here, which hasn't happened. And a conversation. Those

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conversations aren't taking place, and I'd be the first one to say, "I'll be a part of those debates." I'll be a part of those debates. When we hear what happened with the state universities, why are you involved in this? This doesn't affect you. This does not affect you. And remember -- and I'm going to summarize -- I have two points to summarize with this. I remember -- I'm not sure of the name of it, but it says, well they came for the Catholics, but I wasn't a Catholic so I didn't stand up. And they came for the Protestants, and I wasn't a Protestant, and they came for everybody, and, guess what, they finally came, and I was the only one left. And that's kind of what this is, is a moment where you haven't included any of us, and if we don't band together and stand up, that's how we're going to be.

Last but not least, all of the efforts of let's call it the resistance, the reluctant warriors, the union involvement, the unity statements, everything else. I think those are wonderful, that's great. It's a grassroots effort. But I want to say we're not a lone voice in the wilderness, as has been portrayed here. You know, we've got happy people, and this is just a rebellious and rambunctious. We're not the lone voice in the wilderness. We're joined by all of our colleagues, ex-presidents, parents, students, and there're a lot more people that have signed petitions and bills. In fact, 11 out of 12 campus faculty senates -- the governance bodies -- have voted against this in a vote of no confidence, and there's been no response to that, no positive response, let's get together and work it out.

So, to say that we're opposed to Students First is mild, it's an understatement. We're extremely

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opposed to it. And let me just close by saying, you know, Students First got a nice ring. Sounds good, right? Students First. But where I grew up, I was always taught you don't judge a book by its cover. Thank you.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you very much for your testimony. Are there any questions? I think you covered it; so, thank you very much. Phil Mayer followed by Amy Dowell. Welcome, Mr. Mayer.

PHIL MAYER: Thank you, Representative Haddad. My name is Phil Mayer. I teach economics and political science at Three Rivers Community College in Norwich. I am also the vice president of American Federation of Teachers, Local 1942. I'm here to tell you many of my colleagues in the union as well as the four C's are very concerned about Students First, and I'd like to briefly respond, if I may, to President Ojakian's remarks. He indicated that 400 people of my co-workers were working towards Students First on various committees. There're many redundancies on that list. My name, for instance, appears three times. And like many of my colleagues, I have decided not to participate because it's been made clear to me that nobody hears my input. And my name appears three times on that list. One of my co-workers, his name appears seven times. So, there're a lot of redundancies on that list.

Many people are very concerned, and we don't have any faith in President Ojakian or the Board of Regents, and that's kind of unfortunate. That's why we're here. One of my co-workers went to a meeting, and the purpose of this meeting was to redesign

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curriculum for remedial English and math. She gave up three hours of her day to do this because she's committed to our students. At the end of this three-hour meeting, one of our deans, who doesn't teach English at all, came up to her and said, "This is the curriculum," and she asked where does this come from. Is this best practices somewhere? Has this worked somewhere? His response was, "You ask too many questions." We're faculty. We care for our students. We're supposed to ask questions. And what upsets us is when we don't get clear, transparent answers. Another co-worker of mine was told that if they didn't support Students First her program was going to be canceled. That's not how we do business in the State of Connecticut. We are faculty members, and our input should be heard and incorporated if it's a good input. It should be incorporated and listened to, and, unfortunately, we feel that that has not happened.

One area of this is the budget we've been talking about. At Three Rivers Community College, one campus, the Board of Regents took \$1.2 million dollars from our budget, which is already stretched thin to begin with, from us. Last year, they took \$600,000; so they, in essence, doubled it, this cut. That's a lot of money. We have one counselor for every 900 students at Three Rivers. Please don't tell me that doesn't hurt student services, because it does. I can assure you as somebody on the front lines that's hurting our students, particularly those with learning and physical disabilities. One counselor for every 900 students, in part, because we had to give the Board of Regents \$1.2 million

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dollars for God knows what. So, it is affecting student services.

Another example of this is that my members in AFT and three of my brothers and sisters in four C's were denied sabbatical because allegedly there's no money, even though it's a contractual obligation. Sabbaticals are needed to improve our professional skills. So, this issue needs to be addressed, and there should be transparency in the budget. So, I urge you to please support Senate Bill 104 to get that transparency, as well as H.B. 5114, H.B. 5113, and H.B. 5112.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you very much for your testimony. Are there any questions by members of the committee? Seeing none. Thank you very much. Amy Dowell followed by Diba Khan-Bureau. Thank you.

AMY DOWELL: Hi, good afternoon, Chairmen Haddad and Haskell, ranking members Hall, members of the Higher Education and Employment and Advancement Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 104 and House Bill 5113. My name is Amy Dowell, and I am the Connecticut State Director for Education Reform Now, and it's our belief that these bills before you today would further impede students' access to educational opportunity, especially for underprivileged students.

This past fall, we released a report, *Less for More: Low Rates of Completion and High Costs at Connecticut's Four-Year Colleges*. It's linked in my written testimony and was featured in a lot of media and papers here in the state. The study exposed a number of troubling trends in the state's higher

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education system including a group of colleges with low rates of completion as compared to their national peers, especially for under-represented minority subgroups, and a group of colleges that charge an exceptionally high net price to students with the lowest income families compared to peer colleges in other states and a group of double-offenders which are colleges that fall into both categories, producing low completion rates and charging higher prices. These outcomes fall short for our students in our economy in Connecticut, and we can no longer afford to just talk about these problems and hope that they resolve themselves on their own, as President Ojakian discussed in a lot of detail this morning.

We must respond to these realities, take action and improve the path out students are currently on, and this includes on the community college level, as well. Students First is one of the improvements we must make. In consideration of Connecticut's students' needs, the time to act should be now. Students First will create greater equality and affordability for students, and it will enable a robust implementation of the Guided Pathways model, a proven strategy for increasing completion. This model will map clear academic routes for each student to follow to achieve his or her long-term academic and career goals. And, most importantly, the Guided Pathways model will ensure that students in our community colleges spend their time and energy on competing their degrees and not on overcoming bureaucratic and systemic barriers to success.

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As you're aware, Students First will also lead to cost savings in the tens of millions of dollars a year, effectively repurposing administrative costs towards programmatic quality, and efforts like these that create cost savings for students while simultaneously improving academic offerings are precisely what our report has shown Connecticut needs. Too often in our state, we have failed to provide students from under-privileged backgrounds the chance to succeed in school, [bell ringing] and the Board of Regents was designed to act in the best interests of the state by the legislature in the recent past, and now they are executing on this goal. We need less tape and bureaucracy for Connecticut students, not more.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you very much for your testimony. I have, I think, two pretty simple questions for you. The first one, I actually tend to agree with you. I think the Guided Pathways model shows a lot of promise, has worked in other states, and allows us to provide the kind of guidance that's necessary for students when they walk through the door of a community college to make sure that they complete through their degree. It's a very hands-on model, as I understand, right?

AMY DOWELL: Yes.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): What is it about the Guided Pathways model in your opinion that you think that that can only be implemented if we consolidate 12 institutions into one?

AMY DOWELL: Well, I think President Ojakian laid it out in a lot of detail this morning, which is that it's not fully implemented because it costs money to

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do. It's also, as the name suggests -- Guided Pathways -- it is helping students navigate a complex system. Many of them are first-generation students. They come from backgrounds where perhaps they'd never been exposed to higher education, and to navigate the systems the way that they are set up right now, and I think it was well articulated this morning in terms of trying to take course work at different campuses and being not able to take those courses in the timeframe that they would hope to do it in. This is all part of helping students find a point of completion to their efforts and then becoming a productive member of our economy and our state or going onto four-year colleges, and we have just not been able to fully implement the program because we're limited by the complexities of having all these separate campuses and administrations.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): So, I mean, they have asked us in their budget request for a sum of money to implement Guided Pathways. I guess what I'm asking is should we wait until they get -- I'll ask it a different way. Should we wait until they get approval to move to a single institution to provide them with the funding necessary to do Guided Pathways, or are these two questions really independent of each other?

AMY DOWELL: I mean I can't speak for the colleges, but in my opinion, I think that it's important to build on the progress that's already being made. I don't think you should halt until 2023 to continue working on a program that's successful in a lot of other places and really serves the students well and has the potential to be game-changing. So, I think, yes, absolutely you should continue to fund it, but

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I think we're not going to see its fully realized potential until the campuses are combined.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Okay, thank you. And then the other question that I have, just about really the essence of that 5113; 5113 for some people, and I suspect this is true for people in the legislature, as well, is a proxy for blocking Students First, and we heard the President of the system in his testimony sort of argue that he felt like it was a proxy. But is there anything in 5113 that would prohibit the Students First plan from moving forward in and of itself? I mean, it's a process for having the legislature make its own determination about whether or not Students First moves forward or not.

I guess it's your opinion that the legislature shouldn't have a say in whether or not Students First move forward or any other campus closure, but in and of itself, 5113 doesn't block Students First, right?

AMY DOWELL: So, I think the way that it was outlined this morning was pretty succinct in the sense that, you know, there's not -- it's not a one or the other, but the challenges that if you are continuing to add layers of red tape or oversight in a way that would postpone the progress of Students First, I think it's counterproductive, and it's not good for students. And I really -- you know, as an organization, we really are thinking about what's in the best interest of the students. There's been a lot of conversation about what would be good for faculty and for administrators, and I think we really have to double-down on what's particularly in the interest of students. Students don't pay dues

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to be represented here in this meeting, and I think we really need to bring their voices into this mix,. And the truth of the matter is that what we're seeing from the data is that students are graduating and aren't being mentored in the way that they need to to move on to the next chapter of their lives, and we need to make sure that we're not postponing that for ideological or political reasons.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Great. Last question. Senate Bill 104, which you also oppose, would provide a lot of information about the Students First plan. We would require that it go up on their web. How is that a barrier to student success, especially since you're suggesting that students should be involved in this question? Isn't that just a mechanism that they would receive information about the Students First plan? I mean, why oppose a bill that would increase transparency of Students First expenditures?

AMY DOWELL: Well, I think that their argument this morning was not that they think that there should be less transparency. I think they've been very upfront and candid in terms of -- and I don't work For the Board of Regents, but I will just say that, you know, from an outsider's perspective, as somebody who observes activities on committees with some frequency, I would just say that sometimes there's more than meets the eye, and my sense is that that bill is intended to slow the progress of Students First.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. Are there any additional questions? Senator Haskell.

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SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Hi, thank you, Representative, for that. I'm so grateful for your testimony. I just wanted to focus on the *Less or More Report*, and if my colleagues haven't had a chance to take a look at it, I hope that they do. It's pretty eye-opening in terms of success rates, in terms of completion and cost at our four-year colleges. I just wanted to learn a little bit more about what that report sort of unearthed or unveiled as it relates to racial discrepancies. We heard that President Ojakian believes Students First is going to help close the success gap that's currently emerging between students of color and white students. Could you speak a little bit about that report as it related to the Students First proposal?

AMY DOWELL: Sure, of course. So, Students First obviously is focused on the community college level, and this report was more -- it covered four-year colleges here in Connecticut, both public and private, and the large takeaways were that not enough students of color were graduating from our four-year colleges, both public and private, and that the cost for students here in Connecticut to complete four-year colleges. And we looked at six years and not just four, but giving students the added benefit of two additional years of traditional college to complete, and we recognized that what was going on is that students of color, in particular, or first generation students in college and low-income students, Pell recipients are having a struggle maintaining their ability to pay for their college educations and also that they're not being mentored in the ways that other successful college systems in other states are doing.

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So, Guided Pathways is a good example of something that we have seen work in other places, and, so, we would like to see that expanded on the four-year level -- a conversation for another day. But we recognize that students of color and low-income students are often -- their needs are not met often by the guidance provided on the campus. And what I think is important to recognize is that for students, to streamline programs like Students First and to make Guided Pathways a more robust program on these campuses, is game-changing for low-income students, and it allows them to navigate their experience in a much more transparent, clear way, and it's a proven program in many, many places. So, we should absolutely invest in it.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you so much. I appreciate your answer. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. Representative Ackert.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for being here and bringing your testimony. I can't say I agree with it, but that's okay. That's why we have this dialogue. Yeah, especially on 104, the Chair brought a good question on that one as to how that would negatively the moving of Students First. So, I'll hear more dialogue as we go from this. But, you may have mentioned about -- when Senator Haskell brought up about, you know, the need, and you brought up the need for guidance. And we just heard a testimony while you were sitting in this room about the lack of guidance because of the lost funds that are going to the program office now. So, we're actually going

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in a direction different than what you'd be supportive of, which would be more hands-on because we're moving things into a centralized location rather than services on the ground. So, how does your testimony now speak to that and actually see what's actually taking place on campuses.

AMY DOWELL: So, when the Students First program would be fully implemented, there would be additional resources devoted to Guided Pathways. So, I think that's a little bit of just to clarify, if I could. I also think that we're getting to a place right now where we don't have a lot of time to act on some of these things. We are already kind of seeing what the cliff looks like in terms of the economics of not acting on this. The other thing is we're talking about administrative level, not closing campuses, not having less resources for students on the campus. We're talking about at the administrative level, and repurposing those resources to doing something that is really more student-focused. So, you know, I think that was well articulated this morning with President Ojakian's testimony in terms of what those programs could look like with additional resources.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Thank you for your answer, and thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think what we need to do in terms of like 104 is speaking to people that are working on the grounds in these schools, they see a very bloated hierarchy right now with the regional presidents and still-on-campus principals. I look forward to more dialogue on this. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

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REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. Are there any additional questions? Seeing none, we'll move on. Thank you very much for your testimony.

AMY DOWELL: Sure, thanks. Diba Kahn-Bureau followed by Stephen Adair.

DIBA KAHN-BUREAU: Good afternoon, distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. I was here not long ago testifying before you. My name is Diba Kahn-Bureau; I'm the program coordinator of the Environmental Engineering Technology Program at Three Rivers Community College. I am currently the program coordinator of the Biology TAP Pathway program, and I'm on several other college committees, plus I teach seven classes. I've been at Three Rivers for about 20 years now, and I'm here today to give support to four important bills that are in front of the committee today, and that's H.B. 5113, H.B. 5114, H.B, 5112 and S.B. 104.

I don't want to repeat all that my colleagues have said today because I am in agreement with them, and you have heard it. So, I do want to say, though, that in response to Amy who just spoke, I want so say that, you know, I definitely agree with Guided Pathways because we've being doing it all along. I have 55 students that have my cellphone number that I give advice to on many different subject matters. And I'll get into that in a minute. The other thing is that, you know, I had a \$2 million dollar grant from the National Science Foundation for STRONG-CT which is Science and Technology Reaching Out to New Generations in Connecticut that was for first generation and under-represented students. At our

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college, our under-represented students and our first generation students get as much help as they can and need. So, I just wanted to point that out.

I also wanted to state that State Representative Wood, she stated that if these this Consolidation plan is so good, and this is my question too today -- if this consolidation plan is so good, then why did 11 colleges -- why did we have votes of no confidence? Why are all the five unions now supporting us? Why have many faculty and staff and students (1500) signed petitions to stop consolidation? Why have so many faculty, staff, past administrations, past presidents -- we call them the Round Table -- why are they questioning this plan?

On another note, students can go from one institution to another, and we can make it work for them without consolidating. I said this two years ago, or maybe it was three years ago. As you had stated, there's bloat. There's so much top-down bloat and bureaucracy. I also believe that you as our legislators, we voted for you. I vote every chance I get; I vote. And we voted for you, and I truly believe that you need to oversee, for oversight, as you had once done in the 1960s until they stopped that recently.

One last thing. I do want to say this on S.B. 104. There have been many questions about the consolidation plan. The plan conflicts with money savings. We know that. Why are we still here discussing it, right? Why is it that we are hiring at manager levels and above at the Board of Regents instead of student support for the positions, and

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many being terminated? Some of these student support folks have to reapply for their positions, and many are being terminated, or they are being rehired, but they cannot go back to the union position that they were in. So, you know, another thing that concerns us is the consolidation plan, most of the people being impacted are not the faculty and staff, per se; it really is the students. And without the proper support staff and faculty, how do the students find success, and how can a regional president -- how can a regional new president that we have -- we've hired three of them. How can they really support that student who needs our educational or personal support? My students text me if they need to or call me or come see me in my office. We need transparency, and we need answers, and I urge your support for these four bills and S.B. 104. Thank you.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Thank you. I have just one question for you, and it really gets at something you had mentioned about the votes of no confidence. As I understand it, the current bodies that are responsible for -- that are allowing the faculty to have input on curriculum and program changes are the curriculum committees at each individual college and the faculty senate of each individual college. And are those elected bodies. The faculty Senate might be elected, but I don't know if the curriculum committee is. Is that a voluntary committee? Do you know?

DIBA KAHN-BUREAU: Some may be chosen by their department. So, it's not like the Board of Regents or certainly not administration. It's usually they're selected to represent us by their peers.

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And, so, that is true right now, that curriculum oversees those curriculum changes, plan of study changes, and things like that, but that's going to change significantly and have a great impact on individual colleges.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): I guess I'm just curious to know as we're moving down the path of doing programmatic changes, or I guess what we're really doing is the system is planning for programmatic changes so that there's a single unified understanding of what the programs that will be offered at the single institution when it becomes -- if it becomes a single institution. But is there currently, or do you know, if there're plans to have a system-wide curriculum committee or a system-wide faculty Senate.

DIBA KAHN-BUREAU: There is going to be a system-wide curriculum committee, and I would like to just make one point that you're speaking about is there are several environmental programs. I have environmental engineering technology, someone else has environmental studies, someone else has environmental science, and somebody else has earth science. They did try to make and consolidate those programs into one, but the only course that we shared was chemistry and, of course, the general education -- you know, English 101 and that kind of thing.

My program -- I'm going to tell you, I have students working at the DEEP right now. I have students working for the United States Geological Survey. I have students that go right from my program into UConn, and it's a two-plus-two. They can go right

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into Southern two-plus-two. My students can get jobs like that. I have people calling me every day. So, if I had changed my program, as the Board of Regents originally wanted, I wouldn't have those outside entities like the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection; I have three students working there now, and I'll have two more there in the next week.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Yeah, so last question is just have the existing curriculum committees and faculty Senates been engaged in helping to plan the academic changes that are necessary for the single college?

DIBA KAHN-BUREAU: I am not on that committee. I can tell you this that there are people working on those committees that feel that any of their input is not appreciated or listened to, and some of these committees are 40 people. How do you do anything with 40 people? I mean, I don't know how it works.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): On that last point, I think many members of the General Assembly wonder the same thing sometimes. We have 151 of us in the House, and somehow we muddle through. I guess [Crosstalk].

DIBA KAHN-BUREAU: It's a little different than trying to deal with 35,000 students.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): I understand. Thank you very much for your testimony.

DIBA KAHN-BUREAU: Thank you so much.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Does anybody have any additional questions for Ms. Diba Kahn-Bureau? No. Thank you.

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DIBA KAHN-BUREAU: Thank you, thanks.

REP. HADDAD (54TH): I don't know if I see them in the room, but Stephen Adair and Lois Aime, I think, are not here, so I'll just ask if there's anybody else here who would like to testify, and seeing none, we'll declare this public hearing closed. Thank you.