



**Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Public Hearing
February 18, 2021
Testimony
by
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H.B. No. 5467 An Act Establishing A “Fee-Free Day” At Public Institutions of Higher Education For High School Students Who Complete The Free Application For Federal Student Aid.

Members of the Committee, my name is Nathan Fuerst and I am Vice-President for Enrollment Planning & Management at the University of Connecticut.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the University concerning an act proposing an application fee free day for students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

We applaud the General Assembly’s efforts through this bill to advance the conversation around college affordability and access. However, we have concerns about whether the bill as proposed is feasible due to how the college application process works.

UConn has made deliberate efforts on this front which resulted in record enrollment of over 5,000 new students from Connecticut in the Fall 2020. More notably, over the last five years Federal Pell Grant eligible student enrollment has increased from 23% to 28%, first generation student enrollment has increased from 29% to 35%, and minority student enrollment has increased from 27% to 35%.

In recent years UConn has made concerted efforts to streamline processes for admission application fee waivers. The current process is easier than ever for students and with nearly 24% of students receiving a waiver of UConn’s application fee so far this year.

The university believes that the next wave of growth in providing increased access to the low income and underrepresented student populations in our state will require a targeted approach to reach the students. For this reason we worked with the Governor’s Office and the Governor’s Workforce Council to establish the UConn Alliance Pathway. This pathway will provide an automatic fee waiver to each of the students expected to qualify each year.

For logistical reasons the proposed legislation is unlikely to result in meaningful progress towards the elimination of barriers for students. Students tend to apply for admission prior to submitting a FAFSA. This is because the admissions applications deadlines typically precede priority filing deadlines for the FAFSA. This sequencing is important since by asking students to apply for admission first, institutions then have opportunities to conduct targeted outreach to students to encourage them to submit a FAFSA.

For this reason, the University of Connecticut does not support this proposed legislation as it is unlikely to result in bestowing any real benefit to a group of students.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.