



State of Connecticut Office of Higher Education

Testimony by

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before the
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Senator Haskell, Representative Elliott, and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Office of Higher Education on House Bill 6401 - **AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HIGHER EDUCATION.**

Since last Spring when the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a moratorium on in-person learning, OHE authorized schools to offer flexible scheduling and online classes for students and worked with the Department of Public Health to temporarily allow students to complete some of their clinical education virtually.

OHE also worked to ensure that the lines of communication between our office and the schools under our purview remained open – sending COVID-19 updates to the state’s independent colleges and universities and postsecondary career schools regularly - often on a daily basis.

In December 2020 when Coronavirus Relief Funds were made available to independent institutions of higher learning for reimbursement of their testing expenses, the Office of Higher Education was the agency responsible for allocating these grants - reviewing invoices submitted by the schools and authorizing CRF payments within a matter of weeks.

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Without more detail on what specifically would be required of OHE under this legislation, I am unable to say one way or the other whether my office has the necessary resources to accomplish this type of study and analysis while preserving its current priorities. While the Office of Higher Education certainly supports **House Bill 6401** in concept and recognizes the value of such a study, conducting an in-depth study and analysis of how the Coronavirus pandemic impacted, either positively or negatively, all of Connecticut's institutes of higher education may require the Office of Higher Education to reprioritize staff time to comply with this legislation at the expense of other projects. Thank you for your time.