

March 3, 2021

To the members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is Bridget Mullally, and I am writing in response to **HB6402** and I work at Gateway Community College as the Coordinator of First-Year Studies Student Services.

As a new-student advisor, I have seen first-hand that many of our students **do not** request to be placed in a college-level math or English course when they walk through our doors at Gateway. Unfortunately, so many of them know they are behind academically, and so they are coming to our community college to receive the education that they never had or couldn't commit to when they were in high school because their lives and their struggles got in the way.

First-Year Studies classes in developmental education are their only choice, and they know it!

Many nights, I have left GCC after a long day of advising, and while driving home, I have thought of these students and wondered if they would make it through their first semester given their significant learning gaps. I worry about these students because I know that many may not pass our lowest level of developmental courses on the first try; they need TIME to learn basic literacy skills.

I know, however, that even though some of these students may not move forward and earn a degree, at least they will learn some new and essential skills that are needed for employment, or even just for survival in life! Morally, this new model that excludes essential developmental education is so wrong; we know that some of these students won't stand a chance if they are placed directly in a college-level course without the intensive support that our instructors provide.

So many students have said "I need to learn the basics." "I don't want to be overwhelmed." "I am working full-time, and I have kids at home right now." "I really need to learn and to brush up."

Does the BOR know how many tears we have shed seeing and reading about what these students have been through, or seeing how ill-prepared they are for college? Under the new plan to have students start with English 101 or college math, we will experience even more heartbreak when students with significant learning gaps come to our college, excited to begin. These students will be placed in classes that will kill their confidence right from the start. "Just in time" supports like tutoring and EA advisors are not going to replace the time and instructor/advisor attention that these students require to be successful.

If this plan is implemented, I will be the advisor who is telling them untruths - that they are going to do well and will graduate and move on to a successful career. I will be failing to serve them as they should be served.

Finally, I will add that our FYS faculty are more than faculty. They know how to address social/emotional issues that students from the New Haven area bring with them to college. The FYS instructors and I find these students the necessary supports while they are in our classes. We keep an eye on them and check in with them regularly. Tutors, part-time advisors, and EAs cannot do this because they don't know these students as individuals in a classroom. The supports that are an essential part of developmental education will go away, and these students will be faces in the crowd, lost and floundering. They are being set up to fail.

I urge you to study Connecticut's higher education issues more intensely and to see how the BOR's centralized decision-making will harm our students academically, socially, and emotionally.

Thank you for your time.