

**Testimony before the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement  
H.B. 6402 An Act Concerning Higher Education  
Submitted by Carmen Yiamouyiannis Ph.D., Professor of Biology, Capital Community  
College**

**March 8, 2021**

Dear Senator Haskell, Representative Elliott, Senator Witkos, Representative Haines and members of the committee.

My name Carmen Yiamouyiannis and I live in West Hartford. I am a member of the 4C's union and have been a full-time Biology professor at Capital Community College for 24 years. Thank you for this opportunity today to speak with you about my concerns. H.B. 6402 asks for a study of public higher education. I request and recommend that the study be focused on the CSCUs and the BOR. Recommended substitute language for this bill is included in my written testimony.

It has been 10 years since the merger of the community colleges and the state universities. Since 2011, well over \$400 million has been spent for the system office administration. Those millions have not put teachers in classrooms, have not provided direct student services, and have not lowered the cost of tuition for students. For example, Capital offers about 25-30 lecture or lab sections of chemistry per semester with only one full-time chemist. Over the many years, we have been denied permission to replace faculty who have retired due to lack of funding. Lack of enough full-time faculty significantly affects the quality of the curriculum and negatively impacts our students.

Over 1400 faculty, staff, students, and even the past presidents and chancellors signed a petition to stop the misguided Student First and consolidation plan. I was Chair of the Senate two years ago when our college Senate cast a vote of no confidence in the BOR and Mark Ojakian due to our concerns of the "Students First" plan. 10 of 12 community colleges voted the same. The BOR has been remiss in not questioning and failing to investigate the numerous concerns brought up by faculty and staff.

72% of Capital's students are minority and many of our students come from some of the poorest neighborhoods in the country. The "Student's First" plan proposes to eliminate developmental non-credit Math and English classes for the very students who could use it the most! Many of our students come to Capital underprepared but with hopes and dreams to succeed and get an education that will improve their career opportunities and provide well for their family. A one-size fits all model developed by non-academic political appointees doesn't help our students. There are many ways to develop our educational institutions in Connecticut, but this is not one of them. Let the faculty and staff, who deal directly with the students, help.

I implore you to adopt H.B. 6402 with the substitute language below.

**HB 6402 AN ACT CONCERNING HIGHER EDUCATION**

Recommended Substitute Language Within available appropriations, the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee shall conduct a study concerning the efficacy of the Board of Regents (BOR) for Higher Education and the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system of governance from its inception in 2011 to the present with a particular emphasis on the consolidation plan referred to as “Students First,” which was initiated in 2017. The study shall include consideration of measures of student success, the relative cost of administration, and the effectiveness of communication, governance, and the setting of budgetary priorities between the Board of Regents and the 17 educational institutions. The study may include a review of the efficacy of alternative governance structures for public, higher education in other states. The study will be conducted by a committee that shall consist of: six members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee (three appointed by the Committee Co-Chairs and three appointed by the Ranking Members); two current members of the Board of Regents or designees appointed by the Chair of the BOR; one university President and one CEO or President of the a Community College appointed by the Co-Chairs; the Chair and Vice Chair of the Faculty Advisory Committee to the BOR, two faculty or staff at the CSUs appointed by CSUAAUP, and two faculty or staff at the Community Colleges one appointed by the 4Cs, and one appointed by AFT. The committee shall elect a chairperson from among its members. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum. In their report, the committee may include recommendations for reforms in the governance and/or budgeting structure of the Board of Regents and CSU system or propose alternative structures of governance. The committee shall report the results of the study to the committees of cognizance by January 1, 2022.