

CHAIRPERSONS: Senator Bob Duff

SENATORS: Kelly

REPRESENTATIVES: Concepcion, Godfrey, Kennedy,
Quinn, Vargas, Yaccarino

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): All right. Good morning, everyone. I'll call this March 11th, 2021 meeting of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Public Hearing to order. And want to welcome everybody for being here today and want to get right to it, Mr. Chair. Representative Concepcion, do you have any comments before we begin?

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Mr. Chair, no. No comments just good morning, everyone.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): All right. Great, thank you. All right, first up is our House Joint Resolution Rich Balducci of Deep River, to be a Member of the Board of Regents for Higher Education. Mr. Speaker, how are you today. You're on mute. You need to get off mute.

RICH BALDUCCI: Good morning, can you hear me now?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Now we can hear you. Very good. Thank you.

RICH BALDUCCI: Oh.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Can you raise your right hand for me? Thank you. Well, do you promise swear or affirm to tell us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

RICH BALDUCCI: I do.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Great. Thank you, Sir. Please give us your opening, and we'll ask some questions afterwards.

RICH BALDUCCI: Thank you. Good morning, Chairman Duff, Chairman Concepcion, Ranking Members Kelly and Kennedy, Members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. My name is Richard J. Balducci, and I've been renominated as a Member of the Board of Regents for Higher Education by Speaker of the House, Matt Ritter.

I graduated from central Connecticut State University and went on to teach 11 years in the Newington school system. I bring, I think, years of experience to the role, having served as a member of the Board of Trustees for the Connecticut State University system and on several other governing boards. I served as a State Legislator for 20 years, including four years a Speaker of the house and two years in the state Senate. In addition to my service and the full Board of Regions, I chair the Finance and Infrastructure Committee, served on both the Human Resources Administration Committee and I'm a Member of the Executive Committee.

The 17 institutions that make up the Connecticut state colleges and universities CSCU, governed by the Board of Regents and critical to making sure that Connecticut residents have access to affordable, quality liberal arts, teaching education dynamic career training and lifelong learning opportunities. It's been among the highest honors in my life to serve the students, faculty and staff in the institutions we govern and the communities they support. Now more than ever, public higher education is critical to the future of our state. CSCU is an important economic driver, it will play an increasingly central role and the state moves forward to try to recover from the pandemic, and the economic lights and challenges that it's brought.

History has shown that the majority of our students would stay in Connecticut after graduation, which is a very big thing. They will find jobs in Connecticut builder lives here, adding to our economic growth and quality of life. Our institutions provide Connecticut employers with talented, well-equipped workforce and our communities with a thoughtful and engaged citizen. As a Member of the Board of Regents, I'm excited to continue serving our students and help move the system toward greater collaboration and partnerships across our universities and community colleges. Our institutions are facing incredible challenges in the years ahead, not only from the pandemic, but with steady decline enrollment. Our job at the Board of Regents to ensure that fiscal health for our long-term at -- for long term and we are deeply committed to providing all students with the education opportunities that they deserve. I've seen firsthand the need for experience on the Board of Regents, and there is no nowhere else I'd rather serve my fellow Connecticut residents in this difficult time that our Board meets. Thank you for your time and attention and for the supporting CSCU system. We really appreciate. I'd be glad to take any questions, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Great. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Appreciate it, and congratulations on your renomination and for willing to serve once again. And can you talk a little bit about the Board of Regents and how that's really been functioning and how it's grown or changed over the last few years you -- the Mark Ojakian has not retired. You're probably in the process of looking for leadership talk a little bit about kind of the evolution of the Board and kind of where you are right now.

RICH BALDUCCI: Well, actually, I was originally, as I mentioned earlier, a Member of the Board of Trustees for the university system, there was a

separate Board for the Community colleges in 2011. The Governor brought together both of them, consolidating universities and colleges into one Board, feeling that this will help resolve economic problems, as we move forward. One of the ideas, was to consolidate or bring together the Community colleges under one roof, so to speak, uniting them and making it more economically feasible for us to produce students at an economically safe number, so to speak, trying to keep control of balance. As I mentioned before, there is a decline in student enrollment. There has been over the past several years. But in the past year predominantly because of the pandemic, we're down about 17% in student enrollment, which is a big detriment to both colleges and universities. We have now a search committee looking to replace Mark Ojakian as a President. Hopefully that will be accomplished by -- hopefully around June. We have two search committees working together -- the actual Board, and we have one from the fact, being a Committee and they are working together to come up with final candidates.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, and they doing a national search, I would imagine.

RICH BALDUCCI: Yes, that's true. National search has been taking place.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay. Can you compare the Board of Regents what we have in Connecticut to what is -- what's out there nationally? Is this a -- is this a model that is close to the Connecticut? Is a something that is, you see across the country?

RICH BALDUCCI: We are somewhat unique. To my knowledge, there is only one other Board, such as ours in the Midwest. We have consolidated the universities and community college into one board and we're trying to make the community college into what we call "the students first one college

system", which will help me save dollars as move across and forward in the future.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, great. Thanks. Just two more quick things -- one is can you just talk about a little bit about how COVID has impacted the system and financially and resource-wise and how you -- how you -- how you would expect the system that kind of get up and running again post-COVID.

RICH BALDUCCI: You know COVID is the real problem. It's been a problem of both the universities and the colleges. Students have -- the numbers have diminished or declined, excuse me, as far as applications go. The real damage has been done at the universities, where the enrollment not only is declined, but where the dormitories are and having young men and women in those dorms has declined to -- normally it's like 80% filled or better. At the present time it's about 58%, which is a large dollar amount to the universities. If we have to close the dorms, it costs about \$1 million dollars a week to close the dorms at the universities, which is certainly a detriment to the system and to the Board, who has to oversee and come up with the finances for it.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yeah. And I -- and I appreciate, yeah, last year at this time when things were closing how the -- both UConn and they -- and the state schools refunded money for room and board that hadn't -- you know, that wasn't being used, at least the board part of it anyway. And I thought, you know, you didn't have to do that, and it was a good thing -- the right thing to do. I know that impacted your bottom line. And I thought that was a -- you know the right thing to do, for families, especially those who are going to be struggling.

The last question I have is on the debt-free community college PACT Program. Can talk a little bit about that, and that as well supported amongst

the Legislature and certainly amongst our caucus, and wanted to just kind of get your thoughts on where you saw that moving forward from your prospective.

RICH BALDUCCI: It's -- yes, it's primarily Community colleges. It's a program that we set up and you folks passed or a tuition-free, so to speak, which is great for the students. And I'm sure for the parents who are paying those tuitions, we had taken from our own budget, a year or so ago, monies to pay for it, because it was not funded by the Legislature. But in the wisdom of the governor and you in the House and Senate have provided another \$6 million dollars for that program, so not only can continue but we can add additional students to it, which will help them move through the system and, hopefully, graduate and, hopefully, many of them will go on from the two year program into our university system where we have a great articulation program to move on soon.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Great, thank you. I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the information. I also just like to mention that there are other states, and I guess looking at mergers and consolidations such as Maine and New Hampshire, and Vermont are all potentially looking at several models for -- to try and make sure that they can still meet the needs of their students and keep programs open and schools open. So, obviously, very difficult times for everybody, not even -- no easy decisions for sure for anybody and, certainly, not -- without controversy, but there are other states, I guess, that are looking at similar models, so --

RICH BALDUCCI: The only thing --

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yes, sir.

RICH BALDUCCI: I would only comment, Senator, that, yes, it is difficult. And any time anytime you do

have a change it causes angst, I suppose. Even if you moving from one house to another and it's your choice to do such a thing, there's a bit of anxiety and process that takes place. I would also mentioned that yesterday the Finance Committee we talked -- you just mentioned the PACT Program decided how -- having looked at numbers and considering the economic situation cross the state that there would be no tuition increases and fee increases. Generally, there are a couple that have to take place, but no tuition increases at the community colleges or at the universities for the next upcoming year in 2022, which is a real positive thing.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Right, okay. Thank you. Representative Concepcion, do you have any questions?

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a couple questions. Mr. Speaker, good to see you. Congratulations on your renomination and thank you for everything you've done for the State of Connecticut. Just a couple quick questions on something you've mentioned a couple times in both your testimony and your conversation with Senator for Chairman Duff. On the steady decline of enrollment, obviously, COVID had a lot to do with it in 2020. Prior to COVID, has the Board discussed why there's been a decline in enrollment and discuss any strategies to kind of buck that trend?

RICH BALDUCCI: Well, we're finding -- thank you for the questions, Chairman. The -- we're try -- we're finding that high schools have declined -- students from high schools have declined in enrollment at our universities and colleges. Probably one reason we thought was because we're not making it as attractive or making it as helpful as possible. One of our ideas is to go out into those high schools, talk to the guidance counselors to help bring students into Connecticut. You know, sometimes the

grass is always greener on the other side. But from an economic standpoint, Connecticut really is for Connecticut citizens students, a home run as far as dollars go, and we're trying to make that possible through the PACT Program for one, through guided -- through our guidance program that we have tried to implement are in the process of doing -- guided pathways, to bring more students especially we're trying to attract our minority students who have had a very difficult time over the years, especially coming up with the dollars. And now with the PACT Program, hopefully, they will enroll in our community colleges, and, hopefully, therefore, go on and move into the university systems if that's what you choose to do.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): But thank you for that. My other questions kind of centered around our community and technical colleges. We have some amazing community colleges. I have one in my district and Capital Community College, which is a kind of a beacon here in the City of Hartford. But it -- maybe it's just me; I don't feel like we do enough to promote the community college programs, especially in our middle and high school levels. You know, what's your reaction to that? What's the Board's responsibility to get the information out? You know, it's not just, obviously, for your colleges, there's opportunities on both the technical and the community college side. Are we doing enough to promote that particular sector of education to our students?

RICH BALDUCCI: Two year -- the two-year college degree is wonderful. And you're correct, from the Capital to Asnuntuck to tech -- wherever we go, we've started wonderful programs for technology for these young men and women wish to go out into the business world after two years at the colleges. And, hopefully, we've tried to do that and kind of make certain that the high schools understand that. And that the guidance constantly we're supposed to help

these students in a sense of direction, move them in that direction meant let them recognize that the dollars to cost to go through our community colleges are minimal, and they should, at least, take advantage of that.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Great. My last question, you know, doing a little bit research on, you know, being new to the board, or to the Committee doing some research on the Board of Regents, I noticed that there's -- on the Board, there's two student members that you guys have out of the 15 voting members, which I think, is amazing. It's great to get them engaged. So my -- I guess my question is, how do you engage them? You know, what -- what's -- it is that -- you know, how do they, you know, work with you on the Board and engage to make some policy decision making on the Board of Regents?

RICH BALDUCCI: They are not just on the Board, they are on Committees. And I've had student -- students members of the Finance Committee, and some of them have to make some very difficult decisions, as you can imagine when it comes to tuition and fees, and changes that are being made in the colleges and universities. So they are involved. They take part in meetings, they discuss it. And it's always good to get an opinion from the other side, so to speak, Mr. Chairman, to find out what really is going on rather than just what you think is going on the campus.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): That's great to hear. Because, you know, when I was younger, they just plop us into Committees and you know, not take us very seriously. So good to hear that they're actually engaged and active Board members, because to your point, I think, hearing their perspectives on this board is critical. So thank you again. Congratulations, and look forward to working with you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Representative Kennedy.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My fine colleagues have done a wonderful job asking many of the questions I was going to ask. Speaker Balducci, thank you for being here. I just want to congratulate you on your reappointment. And thank you very much for all your years of public service and what you continue to do. And following up on Representative Chairman Concepcion's question about the students. I think they're a very valuable part of this Board. And I thank you for your work with them. So thank you, Mr. Chairman.

RICH BALDUCCI: Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you very much, Representative. I don't see any other hands up. Are there any other hands up for Members of the Committee who would like to ask questions? Any other hands up virtually or otherwise?

Okay. Mr. Speaker, I have to ask that question. Otherwise, Representative Vargas, will come to my house or Chairman [inaudible] is there. If there's no further questions, I like to congratulate you on your appointment again. Before we go to this question we ask every nominee. Is there anything in your past that you believe might prove to be embarrassing to the Committee, the Governor, or the State of Connecticut?

RICH BALDUCCI: No, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): All right. Thank you so much, Sir.

RICH BALDUCCI: Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Have a great day.

RICH BALDUCCI: Thank you. Thank you all for your time also serving.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you. Okay. Next we have Donald F. Harris of Bloomfield to be a Member of the State Board of Education. I see Mr. Harris. Sir, how are you? Make sure you take yourself off mute.

DONALD HARRIS: Can you hear me now?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Now we can hear you.

DONALD HARRIS: Okay.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): How are you?

DONALD HARRIS: I'm doing well.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Great, great. Okay. If you are ready, just please raise your right hand. Do you promise swear, affirm, tell us the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

DONALD HARRIS: I do.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, thank you. Feel free to give me your statement and then we'll ask some questions.

DONALD HARRIS: Good morning, Senator Duff representative Concepcion, Senator Looney, Representative Quinn, Senator Kelly, Representative Kennedy, and Distinguished Members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. Again, my name is Donald Harris, Jr. and I am honored to be nominated by Governor Ned Lamont to serve another term as a State Board of Education Member. I've had the pleasure to sit on the Board for the past four years, and to be able to work with two outstanding Commissioners, Dr. Dianna Wentzell and Dr. Miguel Cardona. I want to take this time to thank the Legislative nominating Committee for giving me the

time to appear before you to speak about this wonderful opportunity.

The past year has been an extremely difficult year for educators and our children battling with the COVID-19 pandemic, being educated in either a hybrid model or virtual via on the computer, the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd, and the January 6th tragic insurrection at the nation's capitol. That was just a taste of the bad news. However, with the bad, there will sooner or later be some good. We now have three vaccines that our newly installed President Joe Biden has infused into our country to assure that everyone will have access. The death of George Floyd and many others became the impetus for the protests that were referred to as Black Lives Matter Movement. For the first time in memory, this movement was accepted by BIPOC black indigenous people of color, and white members of the community from young children to seniors.

I have been involved in education as a teacher and administrator for 39 years. And for the last 10 years, as a member of the Bloomfield Board of Education, Capital Region Education Council, CREC, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, CAPE, and the State Board of Education, I have been a proponent of the increased hiring of educators of color as a true example of what the education process should be all about. I have watched with interest as our country and especially the State of Connecticut has actively embraced diversity, equity and inclusion.

The past four years serving on the State Board allowed me to become involved in setting standards for the future for our children. I have been involved with evaluations of agriscience programs, charter schools and magnet schools. We have heard testimony from hundreds of citizens concerned about multiple aspects of education facing our children. One of the proudest times, in my term, was a

presentation and subsequent acceptance of the curriculum associated with the passage of the Legislation, mandating the offering of African-American and Hispanic-American history. I had the opportunity to serve on one of the multiple committees that cert put together that had a hand in this curriculum development.

Going forward, the focus must be on getting our children back into the classroom safely. A substantial number of our children have been shut down by being inside for more than a year minus classmate interactions on the playgrounds, on the athletic field during recess, and at birthday parties. COVID has had a devastating effect on their social, emotional well-being students. Teachers, parents, and their respective communities need to heal. Healing using multiple approaches at a moderate pace will bring the joy back into learning. If I am approved to serve another term on the prestigious State Board of Education, I will continue to offer myself to do the work necessary for the benefit of all the children in the state. This means working with the Commissioner, listening to the citizens, and working with fellow Board members.

A hero of mine, and the first African American to serve on the Supreme Court was Justice Thurgood Marshall. He was also known as a friend to education. He was the lead attorney in the 1954 landmark case, Brown versus the Board of Education. He was described as Judicial approach by stating, "You do what you think is right, and let the law catch up." One of his most powerful quotes was, "Where you see wrong, or inequality or injustice, speak out because this is your country, this is your democracy, make it protected, pass it on." I thank you, Mr. Chair, for allowing me this opportunity.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, sir, for your testimony, really appreciate it. Congratulations on

your nomination and renomination and for all your hard work on the state's Board of Education. It's -- you've worked with two great commissioners, as you mentioned, and I know we have an excellent interim Commissioner as well. And I guess I would just look at just to ask you simply, from your perspective, you know, how do you how -- do you view your role going forward in the so many changes we've had over the last year with COVID and the cracks that have been exposed even more between urban, suburban rural students or students color or students of different income, gap -- with gaps in income levels, I should say. And their ability to be able to stay, I guess, where they should be from the standpoint of their own success in school. What do -- what is the Board of that kind of looking to -- how to address some of those things? Or -- and what do you need from us here in the Legislature?

DONALD HARRIS: Well, I think we're going to need to be able to collect some data. You know, there is an assumption out there that this virtual classroom or hybrid classroom, has had a devastating effect on our students. And they are "maybe a year behind". And I'm not sure we can say that honestly yet, until we have some data to prove it. Because we do know that students learn in a different way. I have heard multiple statements from parents that are pleased that their children are in a virtual classroom learning from home, because they're thriving. And then I know of others that need to get back because they need that interaction and to get out of this, what I often refer to as a COVID depression.

I'm going through it personally. So, yeah, you know, it's a -- we don't know yet because we don't really have data. You know, there we didn't test last year. And I'm not sure what we are planning to test going forward this year. But data still needs to come in.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yeah.

DONALD HARRIS: To give us an idea of just where our students are.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yep. Well, I would just say I would -- I would offer two things. One is that I saw something online Superintendent wrote, and I don't even think it was in Connecticut who wrote, let's not forget that our students are experiencing something that nobody else has experienced and to somehow assume that they are behind in some ways -- maybe traditionally behind that is certainly possible. But their experience that they've had over the last year and how that will impact them going forward in their lives will be very unique to them. And we shouldn't brush that off as to try and put it under the rug or pretend it didn't happen or not acknowledge the fact that they will have -- they have a different knowledge base and experience base based on what happened over with COVID. And so, you know, not being with their friends and social emotional stuff and all that's going to impact them in some ways. And we should acknowledge that, that will probably have some that may have some positive implications, some negative implications, and some things may be washed. I thought it was kind of interesting perspective to look at. So as we look at kind of their educational attainment, we also need to acknowledge the fact that they'll have certain life experiences that none of us would have had, because we didn't experience that while we're in school.

DONALD HARRIS: Our children are a lot more resilient, that sometimes we give them credit for. I don't know if I could have made it as a child --

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yeah.

DONALD HARRIS: And the environment that they live in, but they seem to be doing okay.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yeah.

DONALD HARRIS: There are those that still need some help. And I understand that, but I have two grandchildren, who are seniors in high school, and they -- polar opposites. One is thriving on the virtual classroom. And one is -- he's in the hybrid, and he needs to get to school, he needs interaction. So it's a --

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Right.

DONALD HARRIS: Half a dozen in the other.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Well it's also -- the last point I'll make is I was on a call this morning and the Deputy Superintendent of schools was talking about, he did a focus groups at some of the schools in Norwalk and how some of the kids -- students like the remote learning and they feel like they're thriving kind of like to your point they are thriving with it, and so is there a model going forward, where some kids will do either potentially full-time remote, part-time remote some sort of hybrid and will that -- will that positively impact their work, or is it all going to go back to full time, you know, in school? So I thought it was interesting question and how the kids are bringing that up of how some of them like enemy and that some of them may come from some familial pressures they have as well, or just some of the freedoms that they might have who knows, but I thought it was it's an interesting concept to think about as to not every kid is doing poorly because of virtual there are certainly kids who are not doing as well as they shouldn't because of lack of technology or lack of resources in their school districts, but individually some kids might like to do more remote than in person, we have to start -- we have to think about that a little bit, which just sounds like you're talking about as well.

DONALD HARRIS: Yes. Yes, indeed.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yeah, thank you. And thanks again for willing to serve in such an important position. Again, it's not easy so certainly appreciate it. Mr. Chairman, Representative Concepcion?

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good morning, Mr. Harris, congratulations on your nomination and thank you for your decade's worth of -- with the children, here in the State of Connecticut. Just a couple quick questions, I want to focus on a little bit on a statement you've had here in your written testimony, which says you're a proponent of increased hiring of educators of color, which I really do appreciate. One of the reasons I'm here in Connecticut is my parents moved us -- me and my sister from Puerto Rico because there was a recruitment effort to hire more bilingual teachers here in Connecticut so it gave us the opportunity to move to this great state and really thrive here so I'm a huge proponent of what you're you've been working on and increasing educators of color. I think especially here in our urban areas, we need to ensure that our children are getting taught by individuals that look like them, that have -- you know that certainly appreciate with where they've come from, so I guess, my question is, are there any specific initiatives that the Board is working on or has worked on to increase that that number of educators of color into our into our school systems.

DONALD HARRIS: We have just -- as a -- as a Board, we have been supported of the -- of the Legislation that moving towards the -- and I -- but I've -- I temporarily I forgot the name of the Legislation, but we have been supportive of it. What for me, and working with other groups, this is an area that I've been working on since I started teaching in 1967. All right? And I began doing this supporting of bringing in persons of color, or Negroes, as we recall back then. And into our -- into our system

just to -- again for people, who the -- exposed to all of our students, not just the black and brown students, but the white students. So they will know that there is somebody else that they will have the advantage of being taught by somebody other than a person -- a white person.

I went through all of my public school experience, never seeing a teacher of color. And I didn't see one of color until my senior year in college. So it's something that just should not be here in this country. I'm a big supporter of it. Our State Board is supportive of it, but, you know, we're not doing anything particular to make it happen. We are -- in another group that I'm associated with CAPE, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, we have taken a hard look at our Boards of Education.

Because if you look around the state, and we did a survey about four years ago, majority of our boards, including in right there in our urban -- our city districts are on white, and that should not be in, in this day and time, then it's not that people have been frozen out but there are others that need to step up. People like yourself need to step up and run for the Board of Education. And we cannot sit back any longer. And that's another area that I'm working on personally. So I guess if you as a member of the State board, yes, I'm doing this work on a daily basis. Not always in the meetings, but outside of the meetings. Hopefully that answers your question.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Absolutely. Thank you, Mr. Harris. Just another quick question, I know Senator -- or Chairman Duff mentioned the fact that the Governor of Vermont had named a an acting Commissioner to the Board to replace the great Miguel Cardona. I guess my question is what qualities, do you see that the next actual Commissioner should have? And you know what's what

type of leadership, do you see the next Commissioner of Education should have?

DONALD HARRIS: Well, let me say first of all, yeah, Governor of Vermont is -- has officially endorsed Charlene Russell Tucker as our Interim Commissioner. We had a meeting at the State Board last Wednesday and we unanimously supported the resolution to appoint Charlene. In fact, conversation aside from that was why not just go ahead and make the -- make the quick decision and appoint her full time?

Because Charlene has -- the educational background, she has all of the leadership qualities, she is a person who, when she wants in the room people know she's there, not because she's loud and pushy and assertive but she exhibits quiet leadership somebody that you listen to, because she knows what she's talking about, and she's somebody that's not just there for one group of students, she is there for all of the students.

So, you know, these days, when you bring in a CEO or Commissioner they almost have to walk on water to survive. But that's why -- that's how Miguel did, and I was really starting to see him leave, but I do understand. I mean that's a -- well, a wonderful opportunity to become a secretary of education for the United States and, well, a -- well, a boom for the state of Connecticut. But he exhibited that type of leadership. He was a little bit more -- because his presence when he walked into the room, you knew Miguel was there, but the same thing with Charlene but in a different way. And it's -- leadership is sometimes nothing you can define. They say they need this, this, this, this and this. If you want to believe, and I do believe people are born leaders and they step up when need be.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Well, I appreciate those comments, Mr. Harris. And, again, congratulations, again, on your renomination. Thanks, again, for,

again, your decades of work with the children here in the State of Connecticut. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Sir. I don't see any hands up. Representative Kennedy, do you have your hand up?

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): I did not have my hand up but I --

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you Mr. Harris, for being here, I would be remiss if I did not congratulate you on your reappointment. You are doing wonderful work. I enjoyed listening to the responses to the questions by my colleagues. And thank you for that and thank you for the enthusiasm, I felt out of that in respecting all of our students, so thank you so much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): You're welcome, thank you. I still have PTSD from when I wasn't a co-host and couldn't see people's hands up. So Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Thanks, Mr. Chair. And I just want to say thank you for stepping up for a second. This is your second term on the State Board of education, Sir?

DONALD HARRIS: Yes, it is.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): I appreciate your words today, I listened intently. I'm a big fan of Justice Marshall, think he served our country well, and I think we should all learn from somebody like him. And I did support two years ago, I think, for Hispanic and African-American studies. What I -- and I didn't put a bell on the screen, I should have but we really should study the true history of

indigenous or India, you know, Native Americans in our country, but that's a true level. I studied on my own, but as a -- as a child, I did also, but I think we really need to learn from all of us for -- but especially African Americans, and indigenous and Hispanic.

DONALD HARRIS: I couldn't agree more. That's the next area that we need to -- if we have to put Legislation and that's where we need to go.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Yeah. Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead, Mr. Harris.

DONALD HARRIS: They were the original natives of this land.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Right. And I'm 62. So at my age, the only way to know something is to listen to one another and learn from each other and truly try to put yourself in that person's shoes. And it's only way to learn and to have a better society.

DONALD HARRIS: Yes.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): So I really appreciate your words. And I mean I miss Commissioner Cardona, but I sat in this Committee couple years when I said, "I hope you don't go to Washington." And what happens -- he goes to Washington.

DONALD HARRIS: Yeah.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): But he's a -- he's a very good choice.

DONALD HARRIS: Yes, he is. Yes, he is.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): It's not your fault. No, it's his -- Commissioner, go out as well. He's a good choice, but I just want to say thank you. And I

never met you, but I appreciate your words and your attitude and your approach.

DONALD HARRIS: Thank you, Sir.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Representative Yaccarino. Representative Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, I don't really have much to say to Donald. I've known him for many, many years, done a great job, not only at the State Board, but, you know, as a -- as a community leader advocates, civil rights advocate and many, many roles, many, many hats and -- but I never missed the opportunity when someone is going to assume or reassume a position of leadership and education to remind them the importance of investing in our public schools and putting the brakes on all these alternative models that have been using up resources, and really don't represent a level playing field because of all the outside money that is pumped into those models. They make believe that they are not little playing field. But truly, they're not. They are receiving many, many resources from people who would love to turn education into a private-for-profit business. And as we saw on January 6, when America becomes fragmented, it's a problem, for democracy, it's a problem, for the Constitutions, from -- for all of us. And the public schools have -- been the place where people of different backgrounds, different races, different linguistic traditions, cultures, have an opportunity to interact and get to know each other and sometimes forge lifetime friendships.

Unfortunately, if we continue in the road of a group of people have a common interest, common ethnicity, common racial background, forming their own little schools, I don't think that will bode well down the road for our country. So just a reminder to really

redouble down on, you know -- I know, there's many, many problems that affect our public schools that need to be addressed. Let's put our resources there. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Representative. Appreciate it, and in your education background as well. Any other questions from Members of the Committee? Any other questions from Members of the Committee?

Okay, I don't see any other questions. I also decided last thing I'd like to mention Mr. Harris, before I ask you the final question is, I just have to say that I worked closely with a number of staff members of the department on a whole host of issues over the years, and they really truly do an excellent job. So we've had great commissioners over the years. But we also have very dedicated staff members there as well, the department and just want to make sure I mentioned them also for their hard work. So --

DONALD HARRIS: Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): And so the question, is there anything in your past that you believe my prove to be embarrassing to this committee to the Governor, or the State of Connecticut?

DONALD HARRIS: No, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): All right. Thank you. And thanks, again, for being here today and for answering the questions. Good luck on your, your journey and your reappointment and we appreciate all that you do with the State Board of Ed and outside the State also.

DONALD HARRIS: Thank you very much.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): You're very welcome. Okay, next is Thomas Patton of Branford to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Port Authority. Hello, Mr. Patton, how are you?

TOMAS PATTTON: Good morning, sir. How are you?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Good. Thank you. Would you please raise your right hand? Do you promise, swear or affirm to tell us the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth?

TOMAS PATTTON: I do.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): All right, thanks. Feel free to make your statement, and we'll ask some questions.

TOMAS PATTON: Thank you. Good morning, Chairman Duff, Chairman Concepcion, Senator Looney, Representative Quinn, Senator Kelly and Representative Kennedy and Esteemed Members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. I appreciate your time today, and the opportunity to testify in support in my nomination to the Board of Directors of the Port Authority of the State of Connecticut. Let me start with a brief background.

I was raised in Meriden, Connecticut, attended Xavier High School in Middletown, and then the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, where I majored in Accounting. After graduation, I attended Georgetown University Law Center and received my law degree in 1989. I joined the law firm of Williams & Connolly in Washington, D.C. before I was recruited to Memphis, Tennessee, to be the General Counsel of an orthopedic implant company called Wright Medical. In 1988, I became the CEO of that company until its sale to a new equity sponsor in 2000. So at that point, my wife and I, along with our two, then young children move back to Connecticut, where I have spent my career leading

medical products companies on -- and on a part-time basis advising private equity groups who invest in medical products companies.

I've served on the Board of Directors in more than a dozen companies, both public and private. I'm familiar with how successful boards work. I have a deep background in good governance in compliance matters, and best board practices. I'm currently the Chairman of the Audit Committee of two public medical products companies, with attendant responsibilities for my financial reporting and oversight, and compliance matters, among others. I'm also familiar with Codes of Ethics and Conduct. Starting in 1993, I have authored, edited and had oversight on such matters in all of my companies in the healthcare space, which is you're well aware,, is a highly regulated industry. In addition, for the last 15 years, I've been a guest lecturer on business ethics and principal leadership at the Ciocca Center for Business and Society at the College of the Holy Cross.

Many of the businesses I have run over the past 22 years, I've had a substantial number of customers and suppliers outside the United States. As such, I have traveled the world often, including Europe, the Gulf States, Australia, China and Japan, finding business partners, meeting customers, checking in on suppliers, expanding operations and understanding local cultures. I do not hold myself out yet to be an expert in matters related to the Port Authority. But I'm a strong agreement with its charter to use our harbors and ports to create economic development, and the good jobs that come with it with public private partnerships, if necessary. As an avid boater, I've been in and out of most of the ports and harbors of the state and believe they are extremely valuable, but an underutilized asset. And while not yet an expert in Port Authority matters, I can commit to you that I will learn as much as I can, as fast as I can.

I can also commit to you that if I were to earn your support to be appointed as a member of the board, I will use my experience as a business leader, as a financial expert, as a train, but no longer a practicing lawyer, and as an experienced board member to offer my best and reasoned judgment on strategies and operations of the authority or within ethical boundaries. I welcome this conversation to as an introduction to me to issues any of you may have with regard to Port Authority activities. I will tell you that I love this state. I love living here. And it has allowed me a fulfilling career so far. And now I hope to be able to donate some of my time to public service and return. I'm humbled that the Governor believes that some of the wisdom I've learned over the past 30 years may be a benefit to our citizens, as we seek to take advantage of our unique port and harbor assets in the state that can support economic growth, and good paying jobs. I thank you again for your time and look forward to answering your questions and receiving your feedback. Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Great. Thank you, Mr. Patton. I appreciate your time and your willingness to serve on the Connecticut Port Authority. And I think having somebody you have -- you bring a really a plethora of experience and knowledge with you with regard to serving on a -- on a commission authority that is still fairly new, and certainly has had its share of growing pains. I guess, you know, from a standpoint of your background, you did articulate very well in your -- in your opening statement. What do you see, I guess as the -- is your first kind of order of business as a member of the Port Authority, and where you see, over time, the role and function of the -- of the Port Authority?

TOMAS PATTON: So I think my order of business is to learn as much as I can, as fast as I can, as I mentioned, due to understand exactly the issues that

face if already get deeper into the contracts that have been executed, get to know the leadership, the executive director and simply process information learn as much as I can about what the potential opportunities are for economic development, not only New London, which is a big issue, of course, but all the other harbors and ports of the state.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Right. And what do you see as the role long term for the Port Authority? Is it -- again, it's -- there's been changes in leadership. I would say there's different governor, there's New London, and there's other -- you know, other -- I think we have our large ports, our small ports. So, you know, as a -- as an avid voter has been in a lot of the ports in Connecticut, what -- if you had a magic wand or you felt like you could direct a lot of this yourself, what would you -- what would you say that the some of the highest needs are at the Port Authority?

TOMAS PATTON: I don't know that I could tell you right now, but I -- you know, I -- as I have sailed in and out of these various harbors, I -- you know, I think there are probably significant opportunities for more more development, more resources, more assets, more recreation, more opportunities for tourism. And to the extent that the Port Authority can lend it support, create private public partnerships to drive some of that economic development, I think, you know, that certainly is within this charter and what I see as a laudable goal.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Right. And then, for me when the Port Authority was created, what was important to me as a legislator, who represents Norwalk and Darien is that we have our large ports. And I think there's a real -- there's real value for our ports, whether it be in Eastern Connecticut or Central Connecticut. Bridgeport, I think is a port that probably has a lot more potential than it's really

being utilized right now. That's just my personal opinion. And -- but I -- but there's a lot of ports that look like Norwalk or Darien, that also have an economic function as well. They're not quite the commercial ones that you'd expect, like a large barges coming in dropping off, or delivering food or other types of supplies. But they also lift up and they support a lot of jobs, whether it's for towing, or whether it's for gasoline, or whether it's for boat repairs, or storage, or even restaurants or docking those types of things.

So talk -- if you can talk a little bit about, based on your experience, how you view the port authorities, how you might view not -- I don't want you to speak for the Port Authority, because not there yet. But how you might view kind of the natural tension -- and I don't mean in a negative way, but natural tension between say the larger ports versus the smaller ports and how their -- how their economic activity is important as well to the large ports.

TOMAS PATTON: Yeah, so the -- you know, the large ports for the deep water, which is of course, one of the issues is dredging and how to make sure we can remain both commercial and recreational access to these, you know, the large ports with the -- with the deep water capability and the infrastructure to build substantial facilities, loading and unloading of freight international and otherwise, of course, is a -- is a key economic driver. I agree with you too that, you know, these are assets that seem like they can be developed further. And, frankly, if we don't develop our assets, I think our neighbors to the North and the East and the South will -- not to the North. But -- and, you know, turn what could be an economic advantage for the State of Connecticut into an economic disadvantage. But then as you go down, you know, the level of access and deep water, you know, you -- like I said you have recreational opportunities, you have -- you have agriculture

opportunities, local fishermen, supplying local farms, restaurants, you know, getting more people down to these areas as tourist destinations. I think all of that is -- you know, needs to be -- I hope is a part of the charter for the Committee.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay. And I would just ask, again, as somebody who represents smaller ports, because when the Legislation was being put forward, it was very important to me before we even voted on it that we did not lose sight of the smaller ports as well. So I just asked for your commitment that as a Member of the Port Authority, you would always keep in mind the smaller ports and the larger ports they have -- both are very important, but both have distinct differences that make them unique, but carry also economic activity and --

TOMAS PATTON: Yeah.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): A tax base and everything else with them.

TOMAS PATTON: Yeah, you have a commitment. I mean, as a -- I actually a resident of Branford and Branford has two harbors both the Main Harbour, and then the Stony Creek Harbor. And, you know, I'm amazed at the amount of economic activity that draws for the region, including a lot of small businesses who operate in those -- out of those ports, or excuse me, those harbors, really, yeah.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you. I appreciate. And congratulations on your part with questions I have. Representative Concepcion, Mr. Chair?

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'll be quick. Mr. Patton, congratulations on your nomination. You know, I -- I'm new to the Committee. And the area I represent here in Hartford doesn't really work too well or obviously, we work a lot with the Port Authority. So a lot of this is a

little new, but I think you had to be under a rock not to know some of the issues that the Port Authority has had over the last couple years. So one thing in your statement -- in your written statement that caught my eye was that you were Chairman of the Audit Committee for two small -- and then that you're familiar with the code of ethics and conduct. Can you expand a little bit on that on your experience, both on the Audit Committee and on the Code of Conduct?

TOMAS PATTON: Yeah, so well, I'll start with the latter. So the Code of Conducts in general, as a General Counsel for an orthopedic device company, you know, back in 1993, actually, I was responsible for actually writing the first Code of Conduct for our business. And since that time, you know, I -- this has been a keen interest of mine because, I believe -- and whether or not you approach it from a religious standpoint, or moralist standpoint, or actually a capitalistic standpoint, that principal leadership matters, and adhering to a Code of Ethics and, I think, treat people day to day and, and the way we act also matters.

And it's been a focus really of my career. As I mentioned in my testimony, I actually have been a guest lecturer with the Ciocca Center since its inception, 15 years ago, teaching a class in principle leadership and business ethics. The -- now actually is a requirement to graduate from that program within the school. And I think as much as anything, you know, what I try and teach our children or, excuse me, not our children, our young adults, really, is that, you know, matters of business ethics and conflicts arise all the time. You know, when there's power, or money or prestige ego involved, you know, you should sit back a little bit and say, "Really, what's the -- what's the right thing to do here?" And not just the legally right thing, because legally, right and morally right aren't the same in a lot of instances. And so, I

would arguably hold myself out as an expert in that category. And I know that there have been some -- what I would call "ethical lapses" at the authority. The Governor's administration, has you know, given me a lot of that materials. And, you know, I'm going in with my eyes wide open, and I believe actually the part of the Governor's support in my nomination is because of that.

As to the Audit Committee. It's the same basic idea, to the extent that public companies are governed by a Board of Directors, the Audit Committee, in particular, is responsible for financial oversight, fraud and compliance matters. And so, therefore, as the -- been the member of many audit committees in the past, but particularly with that -- you know, that once you become a public company, the Audit Chair position is tasked with those responsibilities. And given my history and experience both of those boards thought that I'd be a good chair under those circumstances.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you for very much for that. And just my last comment, I don't make it down to Branford a lot, but when I do I make sure to visit the two great breweries that are down there both Thimble Island and Stony Creek. So -- and I'm sure you know, again, when you're talking about economic development around the ports, I think that's just an example of that. So just wanted to make sure I did a plug for both Thimble Island and then Stony Creek down there.

TOMAS PATTON: But -- and, you know, Mr. Chairman, the -- that's another great example, if you go by the Thimble Brew, or excuse me, Thimble Island and Stony Creek Brewery, they're on the river. It -- you know, it's a -- it's a magnet for tourists. The place is packed and brings people, you know, into the state, into the community with a beautiful view of the river. And that's a -- that's a great example.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): It gets people like me who usually walk everywhere to actually get in my car and drive down to another part of the -- this beautiful state. So thanks again. Congratulations on your nomination. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know that Representative Quinn had his hand up, followed by Representative Vargas.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And as the Meriden and representative on here, I just wanted to congratulate you and thank you for taking this on. You and I are not apart in age, I don't think our paths ever crossed in school. But I knew of your father and family, and just wanted to extend my congratulations and also the congratulations of my law partner, Brian Mahon, who does know you, and we wish you well in this. And it's always a good thing for me when anyone from Meriden is put into a position like this because it speaks volumes of the type of people that were able to turn out.

TOMAS PATTON: Thanks very much, Representative Quinn. Appreciate that. Thomas [inaudible] is where I started, or over in the East Side, Sandy Lane I grew up on. I was -- Roger Sherman, and then Jefferson, which, of course isn't there anymore. And then like you, I went out of town for high school, I went to Lyman Hall. Yeah, figure.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Representative. Representative Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to congratulate you on your renomination to the Port Authority. I'm glad we have somebody there who specializes in ethics, and auditing our programs making sure that the money spent where it's supposed to be spent, and educating our young people in the

importance of walking straight and narrow line when they're given the public first.

The point I always like to make when there's somebody from the Port Authority or from the Airport Authority before our Committee, is the fact that we are in Greater Hartford areas, the second largest concentration of West Indians in the United States. As a Caribbean-American, I always like to make the point that we have a large Jamaican community. And I always encourage anything that can be done in terms of bolstering commerce and opportunities. Between Connecticut and Kingston, I always encouraged Bradley Airport to see if they can get direct flights over there. And if there's anything that can be done through the Port Authority, to foster that kind of partnership and trade, I really encourage it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you very much.
Representative Kennedy.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll wrap it up quickly. Thank you, Mr. Patton, for being here. And congratulations on your appointment. Your resume is quite impressive. I will note that you did leave one, I thought, important detail out. And that is your former career as a football player. So being someone -- it is a huge football fan with a song that plays in college right now. I was quite impressed with that part of your -- so I can see your dedication. And I don't know if you're on the offense or defensive line, but I think you'll bring a lot to this Committee, and it sounds like you're going to be a hard worker. And I'm quite impressed by that. So I look forward to having you and seeing what's going to happen with Port Authorities and bring forward to, so thank you very much, Mr. Patton, for being here. And thank you, Mr. Chairman, for indulging me.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): No problem. Thank you, Representative Kennedy. Any other questions from Members of the Committee? I don't see any other hands up. Any other questions from Members of the Committee? Okay, thank you.

I got to ask one last question, I guess. So I'm at the beginning, not the end. Is there anything that you -- in your past that you believe might prove to be embarrassing to the Committee, to the Governor, or the State of Connecticut?

TOMAS PATTON: No, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, thank you very much. Good luck.

TOMAS PATTON: Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): And we'll probably be a bit of a complicated job. So --

TOMAS PATTON: I understand that. You know I -- my -- I will tell you that I'm humbled by listening to the public service careers of Mr. Balducci and Mr. Harris. And, you know, this is -- I'm getting my toe in the water here of public service, and I appreciate what you all do for the state. I really do.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you. And I'm sure you'll do great. We appreciate it. Thank you, Sir.

TOMAS PATTON: Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Next is Dr. John Bonetti of Farmington to be a Member of the Psychiatric Security Review Board. Mr. -- Dr. Bonetti, hello. How are you?

JOHN BONETTI: I'm well. How are you?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Good. Thank you. All right. Would you please raise your right hand? All right. Do you promise swear, affirm to tell us the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

JOHN BONETTI: I do. Alright, thank you. And please feel free to make an opening statement.

JOHN BONETTI: Thank you. Good morning, Senator Duff, Representative Concepcion, Senator Looney, Representative Quinn, Senator Kelly, Representative Kennedy and Distinguished Members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. My name is John Bonetti. I'm honored to appear before you as Governor Ned Lamont's nomination for the Psychiatrist Member of the Psychiatric Security Review Board.

As the Committee Members are aware, the Psychiatric Security Review Board is a State agency, to which individuals who are found not guilty by reason of mental disease or defect are committed following their criminal adjudication. As a multi-disciplinary board, we're responsible, primarily, for monitoring the acquitees progression as a received treatment with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or the Department of Developmental Services.

Initial treatment typically begins at Whiting Forensic Hospital in Middletown, and over the course of the acquitees evaluation and treatment, they transition stepwise through a slow and incremental increase in privileges. The Board oversees their treatment and the acquitees progression through various settings with the primary duty to maintain public safety. As the only psychiatrist, I am in the unique position to query and provide feedback related to the diagnosis and pharmacologic treatment of the acquitee and offer expertise related to various risk risk mitigation strategies. I believe that my education, as well as my past and current

employment, have left me well prepared for assuming this role on the Board.

Before I get into my education, I just want to mention that I also played football, as that's important -- seems to be important to Representative Kennedy. For Farmington High School, we made it to the State Playoffs -- State Championship actually my senior year and loss miserably to Fitch, so that's something I just wanted to put out there. But as far as my education is concerned, I completed my undergraduate education at the University of Connecticut, where I majored in physiology and neurobiology. I attended medical school at the New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine, and completed residency and adult psychiatry at the Institute of Living and a Fellowship in Forensic Psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine.

Following fellowship, I returned to the Institute of living, where I worked as an inpatient attending for two years. After which I transitioned into my current position as the Director of the Forensic Consultation Service. I serve on the Executive Committee at the Institute of Living, the Hartford Hospital Ethics Committee, the Patient Family Advisor -- and the Patient Family Advisory Committee. I'm Operational Co-lead on a system-wide violence reduction initiative, on faculty of the psychiatry residency at the Institute of living and hold the position of Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the UConn School of Medicine. Additionally, I'm employed with the Department of mental health and addiction services as a premium Psychiatrist for the Office of forensic evaluations performing approximately 50 to 60 team and individual competency to stand trial evaluations yearly.

My position at the Institute of Living consists of clinical work and patient care, teaching, research

and evaluation of both civil and criminal forensic psychiatric cases. My research and academic interests largely revolve around issues, such as decisional capacity and medical ethics. I am deeply honored to be considered for this position and aim to carefully and faithfully carry out my duties on the Board. I look forward to the work and I hope to maintain and build upon the positive reputation that the Board already garnered. Thank you for your time and attention. And at this time, I'm happy to answer any questions.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Dr. Bonetti, Betty, and thank you for your service. Certainly appreciate it. You mentioned your employee of -- for Mental Health and Addiction Services. Is that as a contractor or are you a full-time stay employee?

JOHN BONETTI: It's as a per diem psychiatrist.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Oh, per diem. Okay. Can you just talk a little bit about -- I think the work you do is very important. I can't say that I'm intimately familiar with the Psychiatric Security Review Board. But it this is why this committee is always so great, because you'll learn about various boards and commissions in the Legislature -- in the State of Connecticut that really do an important function that we, as legislators, of the general public don't always know about. Can you talk a bit about how your -- how the Board's role has worked and not worked through COVID and/or maybe some lessons learned on going forward and how that best conserve patients and the state and orders currently serve on?

JOHN BONETTI: Certainly, it may be beneficial just to give a brief review of the board and its mission before I get into how we've responded to COVID. But -- so the Board was established in the 80s, and its primary mission is the -- is to ensure the safety of the public. We have 100 currently -- 147, 150

acquitees that are committed to our jurisdiction, that we oversee their progression through the state hospital system and their transition into the community. It's a multi-disciplinary board, which is very, very important. It not only provides a lot of different perspectives on a person's ongoing risk, but it gives perspectives -- it allows for perspectives from various historical experiences. So we have a member from the community, we have a social worker, we have an attorney, psychologist, myself. And it's often -- we often get into very rich discussions about acquitees progression. And they're really fueled by the different life experiences that we all kind of take into our work.

In terms of COVID, so COVID, from my perspective, has had two primary impacts on the Board -- the Board's work. One is that from the acquitees' perspective, they have had to respond to limitations and access to various treatments, group therapies. The state system has had to respond as best they could to limitations in occupational placements or employment opportunities. And our hearings have universally spoken about the individual impact that COVID has placed on each of the acquitees that we are discussing. It changes between from acquitee to acquitee, depending on what treatment plan was developed for them. But it has, in general, placed a dampening quality on progression of individuals through the system. Oftentimes, people are staying at their current level of care a little bit longer, because they weren't able to receive some of the treatment interventions that were recommended.

The second thing that has impacted the Board is traditionally we've had in-person Board meetings, which was important because the Board got to see the acquitee in the same room, how they responded to questions and inquiry. And we've had to pretty quickly change our Board hearings to virtual. This has progressed pretty seamlessly as far as I'm concerned. As a fellow at Yale, I was able to

observe in-person Board meetings. And I've participated so far in three of the virtual meetings. And I think that, in general, they have been thorough that all of the pertinent issues were able to be discussed, that it gave us an opportunity to still see the acquitee, give them an opportunity to speak with their attorneys in the hearing, and the sort of the technology has really been quite impressively utilized from my -- from my perspective. Those were the two main issues that I -- that I observed in terms of the impact of COVID on the work that we do though. Hope that answered your question.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yeah, no, I appreciate that is a very good answer. And I, you know, obviously through the answer, I can tell you take your disposition very seriously, which you should and, again, I think it's important that we, as legislators, learn a lot about a lot of these Boards and Commissions that -- especially that really impact people's lives and it is -- it does impact people's lives very much on this and what you do. So I'll leave it there. And, again, I just wanted to thank you for your willingness to serve again and to be a part of this review board. I think it's important and I take it over my Co-Chair to see if he has any questions.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. No questions. Just a quick comment of a thanks to Dr. Bonetti for agreeing to serve on this Board, and congratulations on your nomination. As Senator Duff or Chairman Duff pointed out, you know, this is the first time I've really delved into the Committee that you're serving on. So it's a -- it's, obviously, a critical and important Committee here in the -- in the State of Connecticut. And you're well positioned, obviously, with everything that you do. You know, you're busy man, as you can tell by your testimony So just wanted to thank you and

congratulate you on your your nomination. So thanks for being here. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Any other questions from Members of the Committee? Any other questions from Members of the Committee? Okay, I don't see any. I just asked the last question. Is there anything in your past that you believe my prove embarrassing to this Committee, the Governor, or the State of Connecticut?

JOHN BONETTI: No, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay. Thank you. Thanks for your time. Congratulations again.

JOHN BONETTI: Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): All right. I think Madam Clerk, that was all of our people for today -- our nominees. And we will then adjourn the hearing. And why don't we convene the Committee meeting, the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee meeting for Thursday, March 11th, 2021 to pick up our nominations for your. Let me just pull up the agenda. All right. Just pretty much the same as the public health -- Public Hearing agenda. Mr. Chair, Representative Concepcion, do you have any comments before we before we move forward?

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Nope, I'm good. Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, thank you. All right. And for our first item of business is to approve the -- as our House Joint Resolutions approve the nomination for Richard Balducci of Deep River to be a Member of the Board of Regents for Higher Education. Is there a motion?

REP. GODFREY (110TH): So move back.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Second.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): By Representative Godfrey, second by Representative Concepcion. Any discussion? If not, Madam Clerk, would you please call the roll?

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Senator vote yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Concepcion.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Representative Concepcion votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Looney. Representative Quinn.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Representative Quinn vote yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Kelly. Representative Kennedy.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Representative Kennedy votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: I missed you on camera, Ma'am. One more time?

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Representative Kennedy votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Thank you. Representative D'Agostino. Senator Fonfarra. Senator Formica. Representative Godfrey?

REP. GODFREY (110TH): Representative Godfrey votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Hartley, Senator Kushner, Senator Moore, Representative Perillo, Senator Somers, Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Representative Yaccarino votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Vargas. That's the roll.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, thank you Madam Clerk. On the second item, Donald F. Harris of Bloomfield to be Member of the State Board of Education. Is there a motion to approve?

REP. QUINN (82ND): So move.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, rep -- moved by Representative Quinn.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Second.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Seconded by Representative Kennedy. Any discussion? If not, Madam Clerk, please call the roll.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Senator Duff votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Concepcion.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Representative Concepcion votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Looney, Representative Quinn.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Representative Quinn votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Kelly.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Senator Kelly votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Kennedy?

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Representative Kennedy votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative D'Agostino, Senator Fonfarra, Senator Formica, Representative Godfrey.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): Representative Godfrey votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Hartley, Senator Kirschner, Senator Moore, Representative Perillo, Senator Somers, Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Representative Yaccarino votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Vargas. That's the roll.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, thank you, Madam Clerk. Next is Thomas Patton of Branford to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Port Authority. Is there a motion to approve?

REP. QUINN (82ND): So moved.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Moved by Representative Quinn. Is there a second?

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Second by Representative Yaccarino. Any discussion? If not, Madam Clerk, please call the roll.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Senator Duff votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Concepcion.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Representative Concepcion votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Looney, Representative Quinn.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Representative Quinn votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Kelly.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Senator Kelly votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Kennedy?

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Representative Kennedy votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative D'Agostino, Senator Fonfara, Senator Formica, Representative Godfrey.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): Representative Godfrey votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Hartley, Senator Kushner, Senator Moore, Representative Perillo, Senator Somers, Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Representative Yaccarino votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Representative Vargas votes yes.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay. Thank you, Madam Clerk. Next is a Senate Joint Resolution for Dr. John Bonetti of Farmington to be a Member of the Psychiatric Security Review Board. Is there a motion?

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): So moved.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Second.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Moved by Representative Concepcion, seconded by Representative Vargas. Any discussion? If not, Madam Clerk, please call the roll.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Senator Duff votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Concepcion.

REP. CONCEPCION (4TH): Representative Concepcion
votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Looney, Representative Quinn.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Representative Quinn votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Kelly.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Senator Kelly votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Kennedy.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Representative Kennedy votes
yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative D'Agostino, Senator
Fonfarra, Senator Formica, Representative Godfrey.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): Representative Godfrey votes
yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Hartley, Senator Kushner,
Senator Moore, Representative Perillo, Senator
Somers, Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Representative Yaccarino
votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Representative Vargas votes yes.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, that's it, I believe.
Everyone, we're going to hold the vote open till
three o'clock today so others can get their votes.

And I know that there's a lot of other meetings going on right now, so we'll give folks a chance to cast their -- cast their votes for these nominees.

Our next meeting will be -- is to be determined. We don't have any meetings scheduled for next week. The week after, I think we're gonna have to shift a little bit because of House and Senate session days, so we'll send out more information on that, as it becomes available. So, with that, any -- anybody else have any questions or comments? Okay, thanks, everybody. We'll recess the meeting. We'll recess the meeting. And we'll see you all soon. Be good. Enjoy the weather out.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): When do you hold -- cast the votes for Rich Bellucci.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Take care, all.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Wendy.

WENDY FRITZ: Okay, I'm sorry. Okay, I'm done.