



Higher Education & Employment Committee

Public Hearing

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Testimony

by

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H.B. 5034 AN ACT PROHIBITING AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION FROM CONSIDERING LEGACY PREFERENCES IN THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS.

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 in opposition of H.B. 5034, a bill concerning utilization of legacy status in the admissions process.

To start out, although the information is collected at the time of application, let me clarify that the University of Connecticut does not consider legacy status as a part of admissions decisions.

To this end, we agree that factors such as first-generation status, an individual's background, their service to their community and their achievements in and outside of the classroom are far better indicators of their potential for success. These and other appropriate factors are included in our holistic review, as prescribed by our University Senate Bylaws, which govern what is considered for admission to the University of Connecticut.

Many of you are also aware that the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) has again agreed to hear a case on the utilization of race in admissions (Harvard, UNC v. SFFA), the third time the court has taken up the question in the past ten years.

For matters of legal precedence and matters of institutional autonomy, we believe it is critical that the Connecticut General Assembly avoid passing such a bill. Universities nationwide have made a compelling case in support of consideration of factors in admissions that are tailored to their institution. This has served an important basis for prior SCOTUS cases in support of the utilization of race in admissions decisions as part of a holistic, individualized applicant evaluation on the part of the University of Texas-Austin (Fisher v. Texas), the University of California-Davis (Regents of the University of California v. Bakke), and the University of Michigan (Grutter v. Bollinger).

By passing this bill, it will be difficult to avoid the 'slippery slope' of further legislative restrictions over college admissions, making institutions subject to the prevailing opinion of elected bodies day-to-day. The passage of this bill might actually undercut our ability to successfully defend our admissions processes that are inspired by the university's mission, tailored to our unique institutional circumstances, and articulated specifically under the authority of our University Senate to best serve our desire to attract the best, brightest and most diverse students to UConn.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support of the University of Connecticut. I am happy to answer any questions.