

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1153

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN EXEMPTION FROM DISCLOSURE FOR CERTAIN HIGHER EDUCATION RECORDS PERTAINING TO RESEARCH OR

Title: TEACHING UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.

Vote Date: 3/24/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/6/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would provide certain FOIA exemptions to higher education records in as a preventive step in protecting against harassment and idea leaching in the research and teaching fields.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Colleen Murphy, Executive Director, FOI Commission expressed concern over both the limitations to FOIA, as well as the broad language of the bill. She asked that if the bill is to be passed, that certain phrases, including “proprietary information”, “pedagogical materials” and “scholarly issues” etc, be properly defined.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Fabrice Baudoin, Professor, University of Connecticut expressed his support for this bill and told a personal story of a Chinese national who has used FOIA to both harass him and monitor ideas. He urged the legislature to take this security threat seriously.

Lauren Kurtz, Executive Director, Climate Science Legal Defense Fund expressed similar views as stated above but highlighted that FOIA can be used as a way to attack scientists that are doing important research that somebody else may disagree with and this discourages important research in our state.

The following people expressed similar reasons for support:

Alexis Dudden, Professor, UConn
Sachin Pandya, Professor, UConn
Michael Bailey, Executive Director, UConn-AAUP
Richard Wilson, Professor, UConn

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Dan Marcil expressed concern over impeding transparency in government.

Jeffery Daniels, Co-Chair, Legislative Committee of the Connecticut Council on Freedom of Information explained that since public institutions use public funds they should always be subject to FOIA and that the taxpayers have a right to know how their money is being spent. He also expressed that he felt current FOIA law already provided sufficient protections.

Reported by: Jonathan Lukasiewicz

Date: 3/24/2023