

February 18, 2020

Appropriations Committee Higher Education Subcommittee Hearing

Testimony from Abdul Osman

Southern Connecticut State University

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Good Evening to you all, tonight I stand before you, imploring you as legislators and fellow stakeholders within our broader community to take steps towards alleviating the incessant rise of costs for higher education within the state. With tuition set to rise around 3 to 4% for the next academic year we are continuing a rather concerning trend of tuition increases in our state colleges. Though 3 to 4% appears to be a modest increase on paper, that amounts to around \$400 for commuters and \$800 for residents. For many attending our state schools, 400 to \$800 dollars is an increase that easily make the chance at higher education one that is just no longer feasible. Such a situation is not foreign to me and the others behind me. We know many, whether strangers or the closest of friends that have been financially strangled by the yearly increases in tuition for our state schools, schools that are supposed to give opportunity for upward mobility and financial relief to those of us that don't have the money to attend expensive private colleges. Even as a state that has been able to move towards free community college, the consequences of increasing tuition are unavoidable and bound to affect these same community college graduates as they move onto our public colleges. I truly understand the difficulty and thanklessness associated with your jobs, but also ask that you take a second to think of the effects of your commitment to higher education. With every increase in tuition and cut in higher education you are slamming the door shut on many people my age; denying some of the most vulnerable yet

brightest minds in our state from having a chance to achieve what society and their surroundings often tells them they aren't capable of, graduating and being able to lift themselves out of their economic situations. Often times these students hold the hopes of a family, a future generation trying to lift themselves out of their dire economic situations. We as a state have to understand it's incumbent upon us all to treat higher education as priority. I'm sure we all know how important of a tool education can be, however when it comes budget season this talk should take the backseat to action reflected within our budget as it really time to put our money where our mouths are. We should all see the dollars being poured into our state colleges and higher education as something that is an investment, an investment for today, tomorrow, and the not so distant future. Especially when our state spends as much as we do on incarcerating people, something that could become less of a problem if we just gave many of the incarcerated a chance to improve their life before they ended up where they are now. We all must take a look in the mirror and decide whether we are a state of opportunity, a state that offers opportunity to its residents in terms of upward mobility, or a state that turns a cold shoulder to its future yet has deal with the economic, social, and correctional consequences of not caring to invest in the higher education that provides many with the ability to improve their financial status. I leave you with this final message, budgets are moral documents. They are a representation of what you as a legislative body see as important to the present and future of your constituent's overall well-being. This makes the makeup of these budgets quite an issue of morality as you exert your values and hard work to help decide what is a priority and isn't a priority. All I ask is that you hold higher education to the standard of public good as it truly is one, one that is capable of serving us all through your future lawyers, teachers, nurses, and legislators.