

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Ranking Member Miner, Ranking Member France and Members of the Appropriations Higher Education Subcommittee:

First of all - we are moving at a clip neck speed this evening Madam Chair - maybe we should keep Approps Higher Education night on Zoom in the future!

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Governor's Budget. My name is John Board, a graduate of the Connecticut State College and University System and former member of the Student Advisory Committee of the Board of Regents.

I am generally supportive overall of the Governor's budget recommendations for higher education this year. However, two main concerns I have include: (1) pension funding and (2) the PACT program. My understanding, from listening to the CSCU presentation this morning is that the pension allocation was not included in the Governor's budget. Our state is heading towards a cliff when it comes to our obligations in the out years starting in 2025 and continuing through the second half of this decade. It would be wise for the General Assembly to try to get a handle on our obligations especially, if we are expecting an economic boom coming out of the COVID-19 recession.

As members of this committee know, especially those who serve on the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, I have had reservations about the PACT program for several years now. To address these issues, I have consistently put forth my own holistic, interdisciplinary, and bipartisan proposal called "Tuition Contracting: Providing Our Students and Graduates with a Fighting Chance."

Don't get me wrong, I believe and share the overarching and common goal of finding a way to make university more affordable however, I think this three part policy proposal is a better approach. The proposal includes: (1) The State adopting a model of "tuition contracting" by which the State provides predictability to students, in return students assure the Connecticut State Colleges & University (CSCU) System that they will stay and graduate from a CSCU institution. (2) Upon graduation from university, the State of Connecticut would implement the, "[Learn Here, Live Here](#)" program, to help students save for the purchase of their first home up to \$250,000. (3) Collaboration between the Banking Committee and Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee we need to examine ways in which the State can bring down borrowing rates on [the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority \(CHESLA\) Loans](#).

Lastly, I would ask this committee **not** to reduce any funding for the extra-curricular activities -- or as I believe they should be called co-curricular activities -- in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students will need to have the opportunity to re-engage with their peers after a difficult year away from each other and co-curricular activities provide that opportunity to our students.

Thank you for your time and I'm prepared to answer any questions which members of the committee may have.