

March 3, 2021

RE: H.B. No. 6439 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Dear Appropriations Committee of the General Assembly:

I am a Professor of History at Central Connecticut State University. I am also been a productive citizen of this state since 2002 when my husband and I both moved here in our early 30s to take tenure-track jobs at the state universities and start a family. I have personally taught hundreds of students, and I have directly helped dozens achieve full-time employment in this state in the field of their choice. This testimony is in favor of HB-6439 regarding the state budget. **I strongly support adequate funding of higher education.**

As faculty, our salaries are capped and we have few opportunities for advancement. Each year we are asked to do more, work more hours, and perform functions far outside of our job description and training. This includes poor preparation for college level work, poor executive functioning skills, demands on the financial stability of their households, and the mental health issues that accompany the stress. This is how you support today's students— at least the one in this system who do not have the kind of support and resources of those at private universities.

In response to budgetary cuts, the Board of Regents proposals (BOR) are punishing faculty and thus students. Cutting adjunct lines and increasing course loads to accommodate the cuts continues to pile on an insane course load and increase classroom sizes, with NO teaching assistants. This drastically reduces the time to support students on any sort of individual basis in and outside the classroom time, whether with class content or career advising. Almost every transfer student from UConn comes to CCSU because of small class sizes and personal attention from faculty. We already have precious little time for research, faculty development, and service. With such demands, there is absolutely no way we will be able to attract any faculty of any quality in the future— particularly diverse faculty who are in incredible demand, and who we already can barely compete for due to our current course load demands (4 each semester when private universities only require 2-3).

If we want to train all of Connecticut's students *across racial and economic demographics* to meet the demands of today's market, **faculty NEED to be current in our fields of expertise.** That means research and conferences and workshops for faculty. By failing to fund, and therefore failing to **INVEST in our public universities** and setting us up to fail, we risk accreditation if we cannot support students in a way that we know is required for them to maintain grades, meet the requirements of both a college education and their chosen profession, and graduate in a timely manner.

COVID has only exacerbated time challenges. I have one on-campus class seminar of 15 this semester in which 10 refuse to come on campus at all. They need this class to graduate— so I am trying to make the classroom technology work to support both students and home and on ground— and sometimes this means additional and altered assignments on an *individual* basis. I have done my best to take advantage of this time to bolster digital skills in the field of History and public history, but this pivot has also required more workshops and webinars for me, taking up additional time far beyond the traditional 40-hour week.

Connecticut's economy is not based on making widgets, but research and service. We are not teaching students to make widgets. Students do not respond to mass educational techniques. We are teaching students to *create* and *think* and that requires more than in classroom instruction! We teach different classes each semester. Each class requires a different syllabus and a different amount of support. We cannot teach students to effectively communicate with multiple choice exams. We grade papers one student at a time. *Respect for expertise, empathy for others, and critical thinking* is what higher education

produces. More than ever, the History and the Humanities are critically important to professionalism and to our democracy. Consider the report 1776 Commission report released by the Trump Administration in its last few days. Written with no professional Historians, this report misuses the *idea* of History as a highly destructive political weapon.

Creativity, research, and critical thinking take time and focus and direction. Our students are NOT the typical financially supported 18-22 year-old demographic. They juggle full course loads, full-time jobs, and responsibilities supporting extended families. They barely have time to learn outside of class time and we as faculty have to be flexible with THEIR schedule and occasionally understand individual circumstances. We cannot do that with even higher class sizes and course loads than we already have. We simply can't. We have our OWN families and our own lives. My husband teaches at Southern Connecticut State University. We moved to this state in 2002 and we have raised two children in the public schools. We volunteer hours and hours in our community. We juggle our kids' personal, educational, and medical needs like everyone else. We are not just transporting them to social activities. Working for the state has allowed us a stable environment in which to raise our kids, but with our own daughter now a Junior in high school, we are reluctant to advise HER to go the very system in which we teach. Further budget cuts will plummet the quality of education and student experience at the CSCUs.

My last point is that, when supported and guided, CSCU GRADUATES STAY IN CONNECTICUT. Right now, of the alums I have tracked in my 14 years with the system, 50 out of 55 of my Public History MAs have gone on to professional work- in the field or one closely related- in Connecticut. The other 5 have jobs with the 9/11 Museum, the Library of Congress, and recently the Cincinnati Museum Center. Six of my undergraduates have gone to pursue Masters and PhDs. All but one- a veteran who fell in love with Montana, and went west because of my History class on the West- has returned to Connecticut to work. I have tracked over 30 undergraduates who have secured work as K-12 teachers or with cultural organizations in Connecticut. These number are not my Department's numbers— these are just my students. Other professors have similar success stories. Such success requires a lot of time on each student outside of instruction, including counseling and references.

Please adequately fund the public university system. We are literally this state's future.

Leah Glaser
Hamden, CT