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Freelance Writer & Editor

March 2, 2021

SUBJECT MATTER: Governor's Proposed FY 2022-2023 Budget for Higher Education Agencies

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

To the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Natalie Schriefer, and I'm a two-time alumna of Southern Connecticut State University as well as a part-time staff member. Please find below my written testimony regarding the above bill.

I first entered SCSU in 2011, as a transfer student with good grades but no plan for my future. I was 18 and had few financial resources, and no support system at all for professional growth. The education I received at SCSU, over the next three years, changed the trajectory of my life.

The magic happened, for me, in the English department. My creative writing professors pushed me to create deeper and stronger work. My literature courses introduced me to the larger canon of English writing, including BIPOC and queer writers, many of whom I'd never heard of--and wouldn't have known to look for—before those classes. Advice from Professor Tim Parrish led to my first publication: one of my short stories from ENG 306 won first prize in the adult fiction category of the 2013 Trumbull Literary Competition.

Last, of course, was my biggest accomplishment of all: In 2014, I became the first person in my family to graduate college.

Afterwards, I stayed in contact with many of my professors. Even though I was no longer one of their students, they were happy to answer my emails, and even meet on campus, to answer questions and help me plan my next moves. They offered publishing advice and connected me with resources. Some of them even wrote my grad school recommendation letters—and in 2017 I came back to Southern for my MFA, which I completed in 2019.

I now work as a freelance writer and editor, with clients both in the US and abroad. My writing has appeared in dozens of literary journals and has also been anthologized. I've written for news sites and pop culture blogs as well, including music giant MTV. None of this would have been possible without SCSU.

Affordable and equitable public higher education allowed me to attend college at a time when I didn't know what questions to ask to create—let alone reach—goals. The education I received was high quality, affordable, and accessible. In short, it was a game changer. It put me on an even playing field with peers and industry professionals. My education at SCSU laid the groundwork upon which I built the rest of my life.

Thank you for your time.

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