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Senate Bill No. 134

"An Act Requiring the Comptroller to Fund The Unfunded Pension Liability Portion of Fringe Benefit Costs For The University of Connecticut Health Center"

Written testimony of Senator Kevin Witkos, 8th District
Appropriations Committee

March 26, 2021

Co-Chairs Senator Osten and Representative Walker, Ranking Members Representative France and Senator Miner, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 134 ***An Act Requiring the Comptroller to Fund The Unfunded Pension Liability Portion of Fringe Benefit Costs For The University of Connecticut Health Center.***

For several years now, the concerns over the unfunded pension and healthcare liabilities faced by the University of Connecticut Health Center have continued to grow as these costs continue to escalate. The University of Connecticut Health Center is held back from entering into various partnerships and collaborations that could provide a litany of benefits for the Health Center, and by extension, the state of Connecticut, as a result of these legacy costs.

It is critical that the state of Connecticut work to alleviate this burden by transferring these costs to the office of the State Comptroller as is the standard practice for nearly every other state and quasi-public agency. Doing so would allow the leadership of the University of Connecticut Health Center to enter into strategic partnerships that

The University of Connecticut Health Center provides immense benefits to our state residents and to our state as a whole. That said, I fear that despite the talent, dedication and skill of its administrators and employees, it's full potential cannot be realized until this burden has been eased.

As you will also hear from University and Health Center administrators, these legacy costs do not only impact operations at the Health Center. The need to subsidize these costs results in costs of approximately \$27million not being put towards education, but to these outstanding liabilities. These legacy costs are projected to increase in the coming years and will only prove to be more of a burden on our flagship university and the health center. Legislative action is needed to address this pressing issue.

I thank you for your time and attention to this important matter and welcome any feedback you may have.

Sincerely,

Kevin D. Witkos
State Senator – 8th District