

# Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-18

AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION

**Title:** STATUTES.

**Vote Date:** 3/3/2022

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 2/22/2022

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

To require proper training of new board members to the Board of Regents and Board of Trustees and to clarify CSCU central office budgeting.

Substitute language:

- Removes the requirement that private institutions create a policy for training new board members (formerly Section 1 of the bill)
- Line 89: technical change

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

[Freedom of Information \(FOI\) Commission](#): The FOI Commission supports Section 2 of [S.B. 18](#), which enforces instruction and training requirements for board members of the "Board of Regents for Higher Education and the Board of Trustees of the University of Connecticut." The FOI Commission also encourages public officials, as well as members of public agencies, to "receive annual training in the provisions of the FOI Act."

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

See Agency Response.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

[Board of Trustees, University of Connecticut](#): In opposition to [S.B. 18](#), the Board of Trustees of UConn "set the strategic direction for the University and provide general oversight of its affairs." This power is granted to the Board by both Connecticut and UConn statutes, as they are "already providing [their] governing board with the necessary background and support needed to carry out their fiduciary and other responsibilities" without the necessity for [S.B. 18](#).

[Mark Nemeec, President, Fairfield University](#): While Fairfield University "appreciates the intent of this bill," it deems [S.B. 18](#) as "unnecessary." Fairfield University takes the issue of training members of the Board of Directors seriously, as it is an ongoing process that is "critical for the overall health of an institution." In addition, the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) also conducts evaluations of an institution's governing board at 5- and 10-year intervals. Massachusetts is the only other state in the nation that "mandates training for board members of private colleges" in the manner described in [S.B. 18](#). Fairfield University opposes [S.B. 18](#) "in large part from a concern about insulating the governance of independent colleges and universities from political influences," and restraint in establishing these directives is the "best course for the state."

[Jennifer Widness, President, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges \(CCIC\)](#): While the CCIC "appreciates the intent of this bill," it views [S.B. 18](#) as "a complete overreach and unnecessary." Member institutions take the issue of training very seriously, and professional development for Board members is ongoing. CCIC's member institutions are also "regionally accredited and must undergo significant and comprehensive accreditations and evaluations." Therefore, the CCIC opposes [S.B. 18](#) in order to keep political influences away from the governing boards of "independent colleges and universities" in Connecticut.

**Reported by: Austin Hyatt**

**Date: 3/9/2022**