



Testimony by Dr. Braden J. Hosch
Board of Regents for Higher Education
ConnSCU
Before the Higher Education and
Employment Advancement Committee
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Good afternoon, Senator Bye, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. For the record, I am Braden Hosch, Director of Policy and Research for the Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR). I am here today to speak on behalf of the 17 institutions that comprise the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (ConnSCU) System. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify today on Senate Bill 237, *An Act Concerning the Sharing of Information between the Labor Department and Institutions of Higher Education*.

This passage of this bill can revolutionize higher education in our state. I do not say this lightly, nor will I claim that the only end of higher education is simply for individuals to make more money. You have an opportunity with this legislation, however, to provide students and parents, faculty members and administrators, policymakers and employers with a way to externally validate how colleges and universities, as well as their programs, prepare students to become productive citizens and leaders in our state. Given the rising costs of higher education and the state's priority for effectively developing our economy and the careers of our citizens, this opportunity should not pass us by.

At present, colleges and universities gain most of their information about where their students and graduates work and how successful they are in their careers through surveys of students and alumni. Unfortunately, these instruments are expensive to administer, response rates are low (typically under 30% for public institutions), and as a result, the information has limited if any value for program evaluation because the number of respondents is often too small to draw meaningful conclusions. Perhaps even more importantly, this survey practice limits our ability to convey to students what kinds of outcomes they might expect if they pursue a field of study, and we have almost no way of discussing the outcomes of those who don't follow through and finish their studies.

This bill provides a different, better, and 21st century way for us to integrate comprehensive and accurate information about labor market outcomes more reliably, more quickly, and at lower cost, by connecting with the state agency that already has the information. Armed with information about employment prospects and wages of graduates (and even of non-graduates), prospective students will be able to make better choices about what they study, where they study, and perhaps even how hard they study. Colleges and universities will be able to evaluate their programs more effectively, demonstrate their successes to their stakeholders and accreditors, and adjust their programs when outcomes lag. And policymakers will better understand how state resources increase educational capital and how this then translates into economic capital.

To facilitate sharing of data and maintaining a single point of contact, we would prefer that employment information be routed through the Board of Regents. We have an integrated data warehouse for our seventeen colleges and universities, operational now for the twelve

community colleges, with the addition of the four-year institutions expected to be complete by summer. To that end, it would be valuable to add the phrase 'or its governing board' to the proposed legislation in each instance where the language presently mentions an 'institution of higher education.'

Finally, passage of this bill is urgent. While our state law has prevented the Connecticut Department of Labor from sharing unit record data with colleges and universities, at least 26 other states connect employment data with higher education data. In particular, California shares labor market data from their unemployment insurance database at the unit-record level with the California Community Colleges. Various other states have built linkages between higher education and labor data, including Alaska, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas, and Washington. These states are passing us by. We cannot remain competitive if we do not make strategic and effective use of existing informational resources. Now is the time for us to make that happen.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.