

HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY BOARD

Sen. Catherine Osten
Appropriations Committee
Co-Chairperson

Rep. Toni Walker
Appropriations Committee
Co-Chairperson



Jeffrey Beckham, Secretary
Office of Policy and Management
Co-Chairperson

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, August 27, 2024, 10:00 am

Room 1D and via Zoom

Members in Attendance:

Sen. Osten, Co-Chair
Rep. Walker, Co-Chair
Secretary Beckham, Co-Chair
Rep. Dathan
Sen. Gordon
Rep. Haddad
Rep. Haines
Rep. Nuccio
Rep. Paris
Rep. Sanchez
Sen. Slap

The meeting was convened at 10:00 am by Senator Osten. She then called for an introduction of members.

Representative Walker offered opening remarks. She remarked that higher education is a critical component of the State's workforce development efforts. She stated that she is looking forward to working with the higher education constituent units to address the budgetary challenges that they have faced, and to improve the quality of the information shared by the state higher education systems with the legislative and executive branches.

Secretary Beckham remarked that Governor Lamont agreed with the legislative leaders this past session that the creation of an advisory board might be helpful in continuing the conversation regarding sustainability of the higher education systems and their financial positions. He stated that higher education finances are a complicated set of systems. In addition, he noted that state support is but one of their sources of revenue, and that the systems have multiple revenue sources and multiple tools at their disposal to control their budgets and to sustain themselves. Secretary Beckham added that the

State needs to be responsive to the supply and demand in the higher education market, which has changed nationally in recent years. He shared that changes in demographics are one issue that the State's higher education systems are grappling with, as are their counterparts nationally. He expressed the desire to hear more on the topic from national experts as part of the advisory board's work.

Secretary Beckham stated that the State is in a transition period regarding public support of higher education. He reminded members that Connecticut received a large outlay of federal funds because of the COVID pandemic, some of which was used to support higher education. He stated that those funds have been obligated, with no additional federal funding anticipated. Secretary Beckham added that our higher education systems are "world class", and that the State does not want to do anything that would diminish the higher education experiences or opportunities afforded to state residents or students from out-of-state.

Senator Osten reviewed with the members the data request that was sent by the Co-Chairs to the constituent units ([request](#)). She then proposed that given the amount of data to be reviewed, the advisory board meet at least monthly. She announced that the next meeting would be held on Monday, September 9, 2024, at 2:30 pm, and that the agenda would consist of a presentation by CSCU on the PACT Program and a presentation by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

Representative Walker asked members to submit any additional questions/data requests to the Administrator. Rep. Nuccio enumerated several items, which she said she would forward in writing to the Administrator.

Representative Dathan spoke of her concerns regarding the community college consolidation. She expressed the hope that the board's discussions regarding CT State would offer her a better understanding of the financial benefit and student outcomes associated with the consolidation.

Representative Paris shared that he has heard concerns from students and parents regarding the need for wrap around services.

Representative Haddad stated that he appreciates the extensive list of data requested by the Co-Chairs. He believes that doing a deep dive into the State's higher education system is a very effective strategy in understanding the complicated nature of the systems' budgeting. He added that it is important to do this work not only because state policymakers care about student outcomes, but because the State has a constitutional obligation to "run an excellent system in our state". In addition to the data already requested, Rep. Haddad would like the systems to provide information regarding capital needs and costs. He also requested information on any cost shifts to students as a result of the treatment of pension liabilities and healthcare costs.

Senator Osten spoke of the value of the community college system, citing her experience as a community college student. She stated that many people choose a

community college experience over a 4-year college to learn a trade and the importance of community colleges in workforce development.

Seeing no further discussion, Senator Osten adjourned the meeting at 10:29 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Keane, Administrator