

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5159 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT FUNDING JOURNALISM FELLOWSHIPS FOR GRADUATES OF
Title: PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Vote Date: 2/24/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 2/17/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Sen. Saud Anwar, 3rd Dist.

Rep. Elish Collins Main, 146th Dist.

Rep. Kate Farrar, 20th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

The reason for HB-5159 is to address the trend of reducing local journalism in towns and cities across Connecticut. By providing state assistance via no fewer than twelve fellowship programs for graduates of Connecticut institutions of higher education, such a trend may be rectified, according to the proponents of this bill, by supporting local news reporting availability in the state and financially making viable fellowship abilities at journalistic enterprises local to Connecticut to train the next generation of journalists in a cost effective and productive manner.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

Substitute language for HB-5159 specifies that the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) shall create a memorandum of understanding with a student journalistic collaborative at Southern Connecticut State University to create such fellowship programs. This language serves to better clarify where OPM will be sourcing expertise in creating such fellowships.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Connecticut State Colleges & Universities, Interim Chancellor, O. John Maduko: Interim Chancellor Maduko offers his support for this legislation, claiming that it is necessary for local journalism to be strongly supported in the current political and social reality.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

The Connecticut Mirror, Legislative Reporting Intern, Sara Bedigian: Bedigian supports this legislation offering their experience as a current intern with the Connecticut Mirror, which has allowed them to learn valuable skills necessary to pursue a career in local journalism. Bedigian claims that with the passage of this bill, aspiring journalists like themselves will be able to benefit from fellowships and enter the journalism workforce with competitive skills, ready to keep the state's public informed and abreast of important issues as the job sector becomes more competitive itself.

Connecticut General Assembly, 56th General Assembly District, State Representative, Kevin Brown: Representative Brown offers his strong support for this legislation claiming that it acts to aid in training the next generation of well-informed journalists in this state and supports local journalists and outlets.

The Connecticut Mirror, Legislative Intern, Mikayla Bunnell: Supports this legislation claiming that with these fellowships, they see themselves benefiting from the support given by the state post-graduation in the journalism field.

The Bristol Edition, Editor-in-Chief, David Fortier: Fortier expresses strong support for this legislation claiming that with these fellowships in place, local news outlets like his can utilize the talent attracted to them to achieve more daily posting, and, as a result, improve their financial viability. This increased posting and viability, Fortier claims, can result in a better-informed public and endorses the public good journalism can do while providing a jumping-off point for young journalists into their careers in journalism.

Harriet Jones, Executive Director, Connecticut Student Journalism Collaborative: Supports this legislation claiming it could act to provide critical early-career experience to journalism graduates in this state, and, in essence, aiding in furthering their careers.

Rebuild Local News, Senior Policy Manager, Gene Perry: Supports this legislation because he claims, "By housing the program within a trusted public institution and working with independent local news outlets, state-funded fellowships can support local information while respecting press freedom." These fellowships, to Perry, would therefore provide the journalism market the ability to access talent through these programs, while preserving their commitment to providing news to the citizens of this state in an effective and transparent way.

The Connecticut Mirror, Publisher and CEO, Bruce Putterman: Putterman expresses his strong support for this legislation claiming that the funds provided by the state to small/nonprofit or hyperlocal outlets through offering these fellowships, it can allow them to support the economy by, particularly at the CT Mirror, paying interns for their labor and paying part-time editors to collaborate with college students interested in submitting opinion pieces.

University of Connecticut, Department Head of Journalism, Marie Shanahan: Expresses strong support for this legislation emphasizing the seen gap in local journalism and the need expressed by local citizens for said news. By passing this bill, Shanahan claims, this gap can be addressed, providing Connecticut citizens the local news they desire, while providing

meaningful job experience connecting their publishing to the public good their journalism has to the public.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed.

Reported by: Tom Atwood

Date: 3/30/2026