

# Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** HB-5479 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

**Title:** AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT'S PLAN TO  
BECOME A MEMBER OF AN ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES.

**Vote Date:** 3/12/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations

**PH Date:** 3/10/2026

**File No.:**

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## SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Gregory Haddad, 54th Dist.

Rep. Corey P. Paris, 145th Dist.

## REASONS FOR BILL:

The reason for HB-5479 is to implement a policy that mandates the University of Connecticut to hire no more than 10 "top-tier research faculty" to improve their standing when compared to other universities who are considered "Research" Universities as members of the Association of American Universities (AAU). By hiring this talent, the proponents of this bill theorize that more students will be able to be educated at UConn, more research dollars from the federal government will flow into the university, and overall, they posit that this could cause the state to benefit from said research and education boosts economically and educationally.

## SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

None Expressed.

## RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed.

## NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

**University of Connecticut, Interim Vice President of Research, Lindsay DiStefano:** Expresses support for this legislation with evidence provided by UConn's investigations pursuant to Special Act 25-3 in which they created an Action Plan to facilitate their admittance into the National Association of Research Universities. She posits that if a

member of the AAU (Association of American Universities), they could attract talented students and faculty to research important topics which are backed with federal money in the billions of dollars, as typified by similar universities across the country. She also states that, with an initial investment of \$5 million funding per each of the 10 professors hired, the university would generate higher funding and industry collaboration in the long run, while focusing on high-impact areas such as AI, bioscience, and sustainability, which will benefit our state monetarily and keep us on par with states with more AAU Universities like Maryland, North Carolina, and Texas.

**American Association of University Professors, UConn Health Center, Physician & Vice President, Neena Qasba:** Supports this legislation emphasizing the current UConn positive fiscal impact of \$747 million due to research. Becoming an AAU university would, to their mind, keep Connecticut on par with major AAU states such as Texas, Maryland, and North Carolina, while, through hiring top-tier faculty, increase Connecticut's standing on the national and international stage when it comes to research. With these items in place, greater economic growth is theorized to occur as more job growth and employment of skilled professionals that can occur through increased intellectual and entrepreneurial capital burgeoning by becoming a member of the AAU.

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

**Anonymous, Anonymous:** Opposes this bill claiming that funding faculty salaries with taxpayer money is fiscally unsound.

**Reported by: Tom Atwood**

**Date: 3/25/2026**