

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-428 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING RESEARCH FUNDING AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER
Title: EDUCATION IN THE STATE.

Vote Date: 3/17/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 3/10/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill if passed would create a commission to distribute funds for research which is currently being affected by the federal government's policies on funding research, leaving some projects with lessened amounts or no funding. If research were to be funded by the state, less projects would be affected thus leading to more contributions to science, the economy and society.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

Not applicable.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Office of Higher Education, Commissioner, Timothy D. Larson: Commissioner Larson on behalf of the Office of Higher Education (OHE) states that OHE opposes this proposal stating concerns with the implementation and funding. It is stated that the proposed language calls for 50 million dollars which is not in the proposed budget from the Governor. Additionally, the language calls for the establishment of a new state commission that would administer the funds which the commissioner suggests would require expertise of certain administrative staff to operate, creating a strain on existing operations. The commissioner states that the timeline is not achievable for the magnitude of the request.

Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, Interim Chancellor, O. John Maduko:

Interim Chancellor Maduko provided general comments stating that this proposal is timely as schools are losing research funding and that if it were to pass it would help increase competitiveness across Connecticut State Colleges and Universities programs, contribute to innovation and workforce development as well as help the economy.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

University of Connecticut, Interim Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship, Lindsay DiStefano:

DiStefano supports stating that research is important to Connecticut's economy, citing UConn's impact of "over \$700M into economic activity in over 240 cities, towns, and villages across the state supporting over 3,000 high-skill jobs", as well as industry partnerships. DiStefano states that UConn has lost significant funding and has had to delay projects due to federal changes. DiStefano claims that this legislation could help ongoing projects, leverage private and federal support, help strategic funding for Connecticut's key economic sectors, and "retain talent".

University of Connecticut, Professor, Nathan Alder: Nathan Alder supports this proposal stating that it would address the current issue of research funding being affected by the federal government. Alder states that there is a fear amongst himself and his colleagues that their funding may be taken away at any moment as well as the need to search for funding for long periods of time, and that this legislation would help ease those fears and leave more time for the research itself.

Yale University, Vice Provost for Research, Michael Crair: Michael Crair supports stating that Yale University is grateful that the proposed legislation "identifies the Vice Provost for Research at Yale University as a proposed co-chair of the Academic Research Funding Commission". Crair states that it is a particularly difficult time to receive research funding and that if this bill were to pass Connecticut would join California, Massachusetts and Texas in passing legislation to invest in research. Crair states that the outcomes of research can significantly affect innovation, the economy and lead to major medical advances and that Connecticut is specifically well positioned due to its partnerships "across the state's research institutions".

University of Connecticut, Associate Professor, Jonathan Klassen: Klassen supports citing his own issues with research funding and how his project was going to be funded but was rejected following the passage of the H.R. 1 which he also states has considerably lowered the ability of the National Science Foundation. Klassen states that this legislation could create a "critical lifeline" for researchers and allow for their research to continue.

CT State Community College-Norwalk, Program Chairperson of the Early Childhood Education Department, CT State Community College Drew Michael McWeeney:

McWeeney supports stating that this legislation could help fund research that would otherwise be paused or stopped entirely, which could lead the state to lose out on groundbreaking findings. McWeeney suggests amending the proposed legislation to include a representative from a community college to legitimize community colleges as they serve a large portion of Connecticut's student population.

UCHC AAUP, vice-president, Neena Qasba: Qasba supports this proposed legislation because it would allow Connecticut to "sustain its excellence in critical research" where funding might otherwise be at risk due to federal constraints. Qasba cites a letter that her research team received from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) denying funding for their research and claims that the current administration is "destroying the integrity of scientific research", stating that this legislation would help protect that integrity.

Professor, Andrei Alexandrescu: Alexandrescu supports stating that having the proposed commission would protect our state's strengths in various research fields.

UConn-AAUP, Executive Director, Michael Bailey: Bailey supports this proposed legislation stating that there was a rally with over three hundred members of their community to stand against loss of funding for science. Bailey states that there has been an unprecedented loss of funding and the University of Connecticut has had to scale back on operations because of it, and that this bill would assist in funding those projects and protect some of the proposed 600 full time employees that they state will be affected if the funding loss continues.

University of Connecticut, Assistant Professor, Michele Maltz-Matyschsyk: Maltz-Matyschsyk supports this proposal stating that their research was affected by federal policies and that they have seen projects delayed and scaled back, hindering the states research ability, and delaying scientific progress. Maltz-Matyschsyk asserts that this legislation would help "expand, grow and support Connecticut's communities and families" through research.

UConn Health, Associate Professor, Lisa Mehlmann: Mehlmann supports stating that federal funding for their project was halted and that this proposal would support not only research but the staff who's salary depends on the funding.

Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges, President, Jennifer Widness: Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC) supports stating that many institutions in Connecticut have faced uncertainty due to recent federal research funding policies. CCIC also states that Connecticut has a strong system of higher education research, and that this legislation would help keep Connecticut as a competitive state for talented researchers, help secure external funding and continue the state's shared enterprise.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Anonymous: Opposes "due to slush fund potential and gov't overreach".

Reported by: Megan Villanova

Date: 3/24/26