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June 9, 2021

Cynthia D. Shapira, Chair of the Board
PA State System of Higher Education
Dixon University Center
2986 North Second Street
Harrisburg, PA 17110-1201

Dan Greenstein, Chancellor
PA State System of Higher Education
Dixon University Center
2986 North Second Street
Harrisburg, PA 17110-1201

Dear Chair Shapira and Chancellor Greenstein:

As you know, the proposed consolidation of six long-established campuses of Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education is exceptionally controversial. Students, parents, professors, professional staff, and the communities where the universities are located are all impacted.

The decision to significantly reorganize how our universities provide education at these institutions should not be done without a great deal of discussion with all stakeholders. It also should not be considered without fully understanding that actions in haste will have long-lasting deleterious effects or be on the agenda of policymakers in the immediate aftermath of a debilitating pandemic.

Therefore, on behalf of the many who have expressed deep concern, and in recognition of the plethora of unresolved questions surrounding the plan, I am writing to urge a two-year pause before further implementation of drastic changes to our State System of Higher Education.

While I recognize the General Assembly’s role in the dire financial circumstances facing the system, the modifications as presented leave numerous unanswered questions for students, athletic programs, faculty, and the communities that support the universities. A recent hearing provided multiple examples of the great difficulties for all involved.

While the pandemic has helped fuel this uncertainty, the recovery plan proposed by the Biden administration offers a renewed focus on how to approach the challenges facing higher education. The potential application of new federal resources, in concert with heightened state support may provide a path for bold and progressive action that does not involve consolidation/mergers.

In addition, I believe the merger -- as discussed -- should serve as a wake-up call for the General Assembly to end years of neglect. It creates a platform for lawmakers to work with our partners at the federal level to make the investment needed in affordable higher education.

A two-year pause would allow us to assess the post-pandemic world and provide an opportunity to find a less precarious path forward.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Jim Brewster
State Senator

Cc: The Honorable Jake Corman, PA Senate President Pro Tempore
The Honorable Kim Ward, PA Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Jay Costa, PA Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable Scott Martin, Majority Chair, PA Senate Education Committee
The Honorable Lindsey Williams, Minority Chair, PA Senate Education Committee
The Honorable Noe Ortega, Acting Secretary, PA Department of Education