

**Prepared Remarks to the  
Senate Higher Education Subcommittee of the  
Senate Education Committee  
re: H.4632 (Charleston University Act)**

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Gressette Bldg. 207**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee. CHE welcomes your invitation to comment on House Bill 4632.

Originally proposed as a merger of the College of Charleston and the Medical University of South Carolina, the bill as amended now does something completely different. It creates a fourth public research institution in our state.

Commissioners have not had the opportunity to take a formal position on this legislation. The opinions that I am sharing with you this morning therefore are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of Commissioners.

But as I have thought about this proposed legislation, I naturally bring my own perspectives and experiences to bear. As you know, I have spent thirty years in the public higher education systems of six states, so I have seen a variety of models for the structure and design of research universities.

Of course, we don't even have common agreement within the US higher education community about what it means to be a research university. Carnegie classifications keep changing, and membership associations keep adjusting their admissions criteria to absorb new institutions.

I very much appreciate the aspirations and motivations of Rep. Stavrinakis and his colleagues in the House to craft legislation that is intended to strengthen the state's public post-secondary infrastructure in the Charleston region.

The goals of this legislation are admirable, and I fully support a plan of action that increases the public presence of higher education in the Low Country.

CHE believes, as a matter of principle, that more education is better than less. I know I'm on shaky ground here, but I will take that chance. We need more South Carolinians educated at higher levels in all parts of our great state.

We do not, however, have a data-driven plan that guides us about whether this requires more institutions, or fewer? fewer institutions, but more faculty? fewer faculty, but larger classrooms? fewer classrooms, but more technology? How do we get this job done?

We don't know what this proposed new University of Charleston-SC, will look like. The legislation currently retains its original preamble, which talks about a "full-scale comprehensive research university."

But I don't think that's what the sponsors really intend. I'm thinking that they actually want something very different from a USC or a Clemson.

I think they want a high-profile, high-intensity academic structure focused on very clear objectives that are targeted to their region's economic development needs. I think that could become something incredibly creative and innovative.

But at the end of the day, we don't know what this legislation will create, how it will be governed, or how much it will cost.

Each mission change, each new program, each performance review, and each facility approval will require CHE engagement. We will be a strong, constructive, and realistic partner as we consider the costs and consequences of each action and their implications across the state's higher education enterprise.

I would note just a few particulars on the legislation as it currently stands:

- There are no metrics attached to this legislation. We don't have any projections about how many students would be enrolled, how many graduates would be produced, or how many advanced degrees would be offered.
- The legislation creates an anomaly by identifying UCSC as the only named institution to a particular sector in Title 59, Chapter 103.
- CHE has statutory responsibility to approve institutional mission statements. The language that CHE "must" approve UCSC's new mission statement by 15 April 2015 should be amended to clarify that CHE will evaluate and take action by that date.
- The bill states that program duplication in the Charleston region is prohibited. CHE's review and approval process for new academic programs also considers the availability and accessibility of programs offered in-state or on-line.
- The proposed new SmartState clause requiring collaborations and partnerships with technical colleges is redundant with that section's existing clause requiring the same with "other institutions of higher education" [59-2-75-5(5)]. Technical colleges are institutions of higher education, and any language that differentiates them within the state's post-secondary enterprise denigrates their integral role in providing higher education to the citizens of our state.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think I've said too much on a subject about which we know too little, but I will try to respond to any questions you might have. I appreciate your attention.