



News from:
COMPTROLLER KEVIN LEMBO

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**COMPTROLLER LEMBO SUBMITS TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF
IMPROVED ACCESS TO PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES' FINANCIAL INFO**

Comptroller Kevin Lembo announced today that, in written testimony submitted to the state legislature's Appropriations Committee, he urged improved access to public universities' financial information, including budget, spending and revenue.

An Act Making the Budgets of the University of Connecticut, the Connecticut State University System and the Regional Community-Technical College System Available Online would require the state's public institutions of higher education to post their budgets online.

"My office launched OpenConnecticut three years ago as a central hub for all of the state's financial data and reports that had historically been scattered across agencies and websites," Lembo said. "Since launching the site, Connecticut has improved its grade in financial transparency from a B- to an A in U.S. PIRG's annual 'Follow the Money' financial transparency survey.

"Despite our recent success, there is still much more we can do to ensure that the public, policymakers, researchers and journalists have the access they need to make informed decisions, evaluate programs or inform the public of government actions.

"Currently, our institutions of higher education are block grant funded. As a result, the state budget includes only a single line item for each institution. The boards of each institution then use state funds and other resources to develop and set their own budgets. In Fiscal Year 2015, the state appropriated more than \$740 million to institutions of higher education through the general fund and provided additional bond funds to the institutions. Connecticut residents and policymakers should have easy access to detailed information about how the institutions plan to spend public dollars.

“The public can now explore the state’s budget online and can even track spending and revenue against appropriations throughout the course of the fiscal year through my office’s OpenBudget website (openbudget.ct.gov). This interactive and intuitive website makes it easy for the public to explore the state budget. My office currently has the capability to receive data feeds from other institutions to incorporate their data into both the OpenBudget and OpenCheckbook (opencheckbook.ct.gov) applications available on OpenConnecticut.

“Subject to available resources both in my office and in the financial offices of the various institutions of higher education, my office is willing to facilitate the incorporation of budget and financial information from our institutions of higher education into our existing financial transparency platforms.

“My office is currently working with the quasi-public agencies in the state to do something similar on a voluntary basis. Additional agreements could be struck with our institutions of higher education and would not require legislation. Voluntary agreements could allow us to accomplish the goal of expanding public access to budget and financial data from our institutions of higher education on an achievable timeline that recognizes current resource constraints.

“Connecticut is recognized nationwide as a leader in government transparency; expanding financial transparency at our institutions of higher education will help to retain the state’s position as a leader in state transparency efforts and continue to improve public confidence in state government.”

Lembo thanked the committee for raising this issue.

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