

Dear Governor Christie:

Dear Senator Sweeney:

On behalf of the Rutgers University Senate, a deliberative and representative body of the entire Rutgers University community, we, the members of the Senate Executive Committee, write to express our collective and strong opposition to Bill S2902 and its proposed abolition of the Rutgers Board of Trustees.

The Rutgers Board of Trustees has served our university well for almost 250 years. In recent decades, as Rutgers changed from a small private college to a major AAU public university, the collective wisdom, experience, and loyalty of this diverse group of civic leaders has provided a balanced counsel for the Board of Governors. The current formula for selecting members of the Board of Governors, eight appointed by the Governor and seven by the Board of Trustees, ensures that this wisdom, experience, and loyalty is also represented on the Board of Governors. Without the safeguards provided by this governing partnership, the University will be exposed to outside political forces that could potentially undermine our mission and quality. Far from being unwieldy, the existence of two complementary governing boards at Rutgers has made us a stronger university.

At this time there is a major internal strategic planning effort underway at Rutgers. One result of this effort will likely be continued improvement of our shared governance structure as the University Senate, which consists of well over 200 faculty, students, staff, administrators, and alumni, assumes a still more important role in university governance, in concert with the existing Boards of Trustees and Governors. To become an even greater University, enhanced participation and guidance from faculty, students, staff, administrators, alumni, and civic and business leaders is essential. Certainly, a change to a governance structure that has functioned well for so many years should not be done in haste. Any such change requires thoughtful investigation of, and dialogue about, how the existing boards could best serve Rutgers and the crucial mission and services The State University of New Jersey provides for the people of New Jersey and the world. Indeed, the Rutgers Board of Governors has created a task force to carefully review what governance structure can best serve Rutgers in its newly expanded role.

On behalf of the Rutgers University Senate, its Executive Committee asks and expects our state legislative leaders to do what is best for Rutgers and the State of New Jersey. The issue of the governance of this institution requires thoughtful, deliberative, and inclusive study. It is imperative that our legislators refrain from making the hasty, damaging, and arguably unconstitutional changes to our governing structure that are currently under consideration.