



Testimony of Goodwin College

In Opposition to Raised Bill No. 5583 - An Act Concerning the Payment of Real Property Taxes by Certain Institutions of Higher Learning and Hospital Facilities

Goodwin College, a private non-profit higher education institution, located in East Hartford, CT with over 3500 students coming from 132 Connecticut cities and towns opposes the noted proposed legislation which will mandate that private colleges and hospitals pay real property taxes. Goodwin employs some 750 full and part-time employees.

The granting of property tax exemptions to institutions of higher education has been in effect since the adoption of the Constitution of the United States. Currently all colleges and universities in all states are tax exempt. The spirit of this tax exemption is that the general public would derive benefit from the educational initiatives these institutions provide as well as a firm belief that government should not be the sole provider of education.

Goodwin's primary concern should the bill become law is that our students would bear the brunt of this action in the form of a significant tuition increase-estimated at 15-20%. As many of our students are of borderline poverty income, Goodwin, in an effort to keep education affordable, has not raised tuition in the past four years. A significant tuition increase associated with this proposed legislation would make it financially impossible for students to begin and/or complete their education. Staff and program reductions would be necessary as well.

Goodwin as a Tax Payer

Goodwin historically and currently pays taxes and other fees to the Town of East Hartford. Highlights and associated data are noted below:

-As part of the acquisition cost of its current River Campus Goodwin, in 2007, paid the Town of East Hartford approximately \$390,000.00 representing the back taxes owed on the property.

-Since that time Goodwin has acquired approximately 100 residential and other properties located adjacent to the college on which yearly real property tax is paid. Currently Goodwin pays approximately \$550,000 in real taxes per year for those and other personal properties the college owns. A significant number of staff, faculty and students reside in these units. Two of the units acquired were former adult bookstores on Main St which are now used as college offices. An adjacent parcel is used as a community garden by students and local residents.

-A recent study indicates that since Goodwin acquired those properties, further establishing its new campus, the crime rate in the neighborhood has been reduced by 50%.

-Given the construction of Goodwin College proper and the three state and municipally supported Inter-district Magnet Schools on its campus, Goodwin has been the source of \$2.7M paid to the town in permitting fees and other related costs.

-Goodwin owns and operates two of the noted Magnet Schools which represent over 50% of the college's real property tax assessment on the town's grand list. Should those Magnet schools lose tax exempt status Goodwin would be forced to pass those costs along to the State of Connecticut and the participating municipalities to meet the increased tax obligation.

-PILOT Funding paid to the Town of East Hartford because of Goodwin's presence and that of the noted Magnet Schools currently totals approximately \$300,000.00 per year in revenue to the town.

Goodwin Gives Back to the Community

Given Goodwin's tax exempt status the college sees the need to contribute to the town in other ways. The following are a few examples:

-As part of the Early Childhood Magnet School Construction Goodwin purchased the Willow Brook Elementary School from the town and currently leases it back for town use a \$1 per year. Accordingly this property is incorporated into the town's PILOT program for which it now receives revenue.

-Goodwin provides a Summer Bridge Academy to the town and other municipalities free of charge for graduating seniors who are unsure of their college aspirations and future life choices. This is a six week course which includes lunch where students experience college life. The curriculum includes "boot camps" in both Mathematics and English. Friday afternoon community service is conducted as well.

-Goodwin is about to complete six high-profile landscaping projects free of charge for town owned properties. These projects include the Town Hall, Alumni Park, Mayberry School, Hockanum School and the Brewer House.

-Goodwin also opens its facilities for use by outside community organizations. In 2013 Goodwin's Community Room, Auditorium, Board Room as well as classrooms were used 1,117 times. The preponderance of organizations is non-profit and pays no usage fee. Groups include the East Hartford Chamber of Commerce, The Governor's Prevention Partnership, The Travelers Championship, state agencies and others.

Additionally, forcing private colleges and universities to pay property taxes while excluding state owned colleges puts the private schools at a competitive disadvantage as they compete for the same students.

Given all the economic development and community service that Goodwin College and other similar institutions of higher learning are contributing to the State of CT and the municipalities in which they live, mandating that they now pay real property taxes is short- sighted.

Thank you.

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