



UNIVERSITY OF SAINT JOSEPH

CONNECTICUT

Testimony for the Committee on Planning and Development

from

Dr. Pamela Trotman Reid, President

University of Saint Joseph

March 11, 2015

Good afternoon. On behalf of the University of Saint Joseph I am here to express my strong opposition to **House Bill 6965, An Act Concerning the Preservation of Municipal Tax Bases**. This legislation will significantly add to the challenging financial pressures facing the University of Saint Joseph as well as other institutions of higher education. It would negatively impact our students, limit our ability to grow our programs and the economy, and negatively impact our communities.

This legislation would negatively impact our students. Our students are overwhelmingly Connecticut residents and many are the first in their families to seek a college education. Approximately 42% are Pell eligible (i.e. low income) and we now provide more than 85% of our undergraduate students with some form of financial aid from the University resources. We also provide small class sizes and personalized academic support to our students, which has allowed us to avoid remedial courses and still provide a high quality college education. Unfortunately, we are seeing increasing financial need in our students at the same time that federal and state sources of financial assistance are being reduced. Like all colleges and universities, we are facing significant pressure to keep tuition as affordable as possible. However, this legislation would significantly increase costs to the University, which we could only fund through higher tuition. Such increases would likely take the option of attending our university away from many Connecticut residents.

This legislation would limit our ability to grow our programs and the economy. Taxes on our spending will significantly limit our ability to grow our programs and ultimately our ability to add to the economy of the State. The development of new programs, such as our recently launched Master of Social Work, which is partnering with social service agencies across the State, requires us to furnish offices for new faculty, provide classroom space with desks and technology. For some programs we may even have to build new facilities, as we are doing for our Center for Applied Research and Education. The new facility now under construction will allow our Gengras Center School for children with disabilities and our Institute for Autism to serve more students. Adding taxes to these projects may provide new, short term revenue to our town, but the long term negative impact on capital spending will likely be significant.

The University of Saint Joseph may be one of the State's smaller institutions, but our impact is not trivial. According to a study by the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges based on data, the University's impact on the state economy includes:

- \$49 million for capital improvements to facilities
- \$16 million on equipment
- \$14 million on goods and services

In addition, the University of Saint Joseph supports over 2,000 direct and indirect jobs for the state economy and over \$125 million in labor income and \$5 million in income from visitors. Taxing our capital expenditures would clearly limit our growth potential and our ability to sustain our record of contributions.

This legislation would negatively impact our communities. The University of Saint Joseph typically requires little from our town of West Hartford while providing cultural, social, as well as financial benefits to our neighbors. We have been able to provide services and partner with institutions across the State, such as the School District in New Britain – our faculty led a program to enrich the public school mathematics teachers; we worked with the Amistad Museum when they closed for renovations to host their exhibits on our campus, our faculty helped the Hospital for Special Care to develop a clinic for children with autism; and our school for children with disabilities serves children from more than 50 communities. We have also invested in downtown Hartford, brought new vitality with feet on the street, and helped to spur capital improvements in our capitol city when we successfully launched our School of Pharmacy in 2010 with over 50,000 square feet of classroom, library and laboratory space. This program now brings nearly 300 aspiring health care professionals as well as faculty and staff to Hartford. We did this with our own private resources, not tax dollars. Most of our students, both graduates and undergraduates, hope to live and work in Connecticut after graduation.

In conclusion, it is widely understood that a well-educated workforce is critical to a successful economy. It is my hope that our state will take the long-view by supporting and investing in its educational resources, private as well as public. The University of Saint Joseph has been strongly committed to this State and our citizens since 1932. We fear that current economic conditions combined with federal and state policies may make it impossible to continue with our important mission of education and community service. We therefore respectfully request that you not support House Bill 6965. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about this important matter.

Sincerely,

Pamela Trotman Reid, Ph.D.

President