



Testimony of Goodwin College in Opposition to H.B. 6965, An Act Concerning the Preservation of Municipal Tax Bases.

Goodwin College, a private non-profit higher educational institution, located in East Hartford, CT with over 3,500 students coming from 132 Connecticut cities & towns strongly opposes H.B. 6965, An Act Concerning the Preservation of Municipal Tax Bases. Goodwin employs some 750 full and part-time employees and already is a leading tax payer in the Town of East Hartford.

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. 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 five years. A significant tuition increase associated with this proposed legislation would make it financially impossible for many students to begin and/or complete their education. Staff and program reductions would be necessary as well.

The fact that the proposed bill has an effective date of July 1, 2016 regarding taxable land acquisitions does not mitigate the issue in that Goodwin cannot determine what future land purchases may be. There are several parcels adjacent to Goodwin property that may be of future interest to the college and its operations but being able to acquire those parcels within the prescribed time may not be possible for a variety of reasons both from Goodwin's perspective and that of the seller.

Additionally the inclusion of personal property tax on college assets acquired after July 2016 will be an onerous burden given the significant amount of computers or other student educational tools purchased in a typical year.

Goodwin as a Current Tax Payer

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

-In 2007, as part of the acquisition cost of its current River Campus, Goodwin paid the Town of East Hartford approximately \$390,000 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 \$350,000 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. Goodwin continues to voluntarily pay taxes on these properties. Two of the units acquired were former adult bookstores on Main Street 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.

-PILOT Funding paid to the Town of East Hartford because of Goodwin's presence and that of the noted Magnet Schools currently totals approximately \$350,000 per year in revenue to the town. That number will increase significantly next year when the full value of the Magnet Schools is realized.

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:

-Goodwin has also acquired publicly owned properties which previously generated no tax revenue for the town resulting in: 1) Revenue for the town from the sale proceeds, and; 2) future revenue from permitting and property taxes.

-As part of the Early Childhood Magnet School Construction Goodwin purchased the Willow Brook Elementary School from the town for \$1.2M and currently leases it back for town use at \$1 per year. Accordingly this property is incorporated into the town's PILOT program for which it now receives revenue.

-Goodwin recently purchased a public housing project, King Court, from the East Hartford Housing Authority for \$3.2M which now puts that property back on the tax rolls.

-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 some 80 students experience college life.

The curriculum includes “boot camps” in both Mathematics and English. Friday afternoon community service is conducted as well.

-As part of its partnership with the East Hartford South End Senior Center, Goodwin offers free adult continuing education courses. Sixty-eight (68) East Hartford residents took advantage of that offering last year.

Goodwin has recently opened its Main Street dental hygiene education lab to needy East Hartford residents free of charge for dental hygiene services.

-In 2014 Goodwin completed 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. Approximately \$50,000 in landscaping design & plantings were donated to the town.

-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 are non-profit and pay 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 Connecticut and the municipalities in which they live, mandating that they now pay real property taxes is short-sighted.

The impact of such legislation would only add to the financial burden of our students no doubt resulting in additional financial debt. Many of our students receive public assistance through food stamps and other publicly funded programs.

For the majority of Goodwin students, getting a college education is their only path to independence and self-sufficiency.

Thank you.

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