

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

WALTER HARRISON, PRESIDENT

**Testimony for the
Appropriations Committee**

From

Walter Harrison

University of Hartford

February 24, 2015

On behalf of the member institutions of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), **I am submitting testimony in opposition to Governor Malloy's budget proposal to exclude Connecticut students who attend Connecticut private colleges from receiving state financial aid funds through the Governor's Scholarship Program, beginning next year.** The proposal would cut \$4.6 million in FY16 and \$7.6 million FY17 with further cuts assumed in future years as current recipients graduate.

I am here this evening to ask the legislature to continue funding and supporting Connecticut students through the Governor's scholarship at private colleges and universities. While I realize that you as legislators face very difficult challenges in deciding how to eliminate the state's projected financial deficit, I urge you in the strongest possible terms not to cut these funds. Such a cut would jeopardize the state's future prosperity but also weaken one of the state's strongest assets, private higher education. I say this as someone who not only leads one of the state's largest private universities but also as a graduate of one of its finest undergraduate colleges, Trinity College.

This cut would be a significant blow to the University of Hartford. First a little history. In 2009-2010, the University received a high of \$3M from the State towards need-based grants. We are at an all-time low in the current year of \$1.4M. Since 2009, we have seen the bottom drop out from underneath the economy and the financial need of our student body rise with the unemployment rates. For example, the University saw an overall rise in the number of Pell Grant recipients following the depression in 2009. We went from 1,232 Pell recipients in the 2009-2010 academic year to 1,486 in the 2010-2011 academic year. We've held relatively steady since that time. The University is spending more of its own dollars than ever before to assist these students.

We are not a wealthy University. We have a total endowment of \$150 million dollars. We simply do not have the resources to make up this cut. We are a University that prides itself with doing more with less, but this may be a cut we cannot replace.

We are a university of about 7,000 students, 5300 undergraduate students and 1700 graduate students. Approximately 40 per cent of undergraduate students are Connecticut residents and—although none of our graduate students receive any state financial aid--about 65 per cent of them come from Connecticut.

Since our founding, we have been a private university with a public purpose. Although our students come from 47 states and 65 different countries, we have always been focused on the working class. Last year we awarded \$6 million dollars of our own funds in need-based aid to Connecticut residents. Cutting Governor's scholarships will hurt the students whose families can least afford the costs of college. This cut will specifically hurt the chances of these students to attend the University.

We believe we are one of the most diverse private universities in all of New England. This year 30 per cent of our students are American students of color. Approximately 30 per cent of our students are Jewish, and eight per cent of our students are international. This diversity makes for a very vibrant learning community where, among the many things our students learn, they learn a lot about each other.

We are especially devoted to students from Hartford. We offer half-tuition scholarships to any Hartford resident who is admitted as an undergraduate student to the University. We have begun two public magnet schools on our campus—the University of Hartford Magnet School and the University High School of Science and Engineering, both of whom have been recognized as among the best magnet schools in the entire country. We are partners with the city and state in developing the Upper Albany and Blue Hills neighborhoods of Hartford, and the Upper Albany Main Street program has been nationally recognized as an outstanding urban economic development initiative.

We have partnerships with a wide variety of public schools, community colleges, financial service and insurance companies, and large and small technology companies throughout Hartford, the state, and the region. While 40 per cent of our students enter the University from the state of Connecticut, 60 per cent of our graduates stay in the state as employees and citizens. We are, therefore, net producers of citizens and taxpayers in the state. Over 30,000 of graduates live in Connecticut, giving us the largest body of Connecticut alumni among all private universities.

We are proud of all these partnerships we have with the State of Connecticut. We will continue these partnerships no matter what you decide about this proposed cruel cut to the hopes of our students. We will do our best to aid students from the State's poorest families. We are proud to be one of the state's leading private universities. But if you choose to cut approximately \$2 million in scholarships to our students, you will severely diminish their hopes to improve their chances of a better life, to make Connecticut a better state, and this will cut will ultimately damage our common goal of creating a better world for future generations.

Jennifer Horner, our outstanding director of financial aid, is here with me, and between us we will do our best to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.