



CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

**Testimony of Paul L. Maroni
Vice President for Finance, Connecticut College
Wednesday, March 11, 2015
Submitted to the Planning and Development Committee**

Good afternoon, Senator Osten, Representative Miller and other members of the Planning and Development Committee. My name is Paul Maroni. I am the Vice President for Finance at Connecticut College in New London. I am here today to register Connecticut College's strong opposition to **House Bill No. 6965, An Act Concerning The Preservation of Municipal Tax Bases.**

First, I want to be clear: Connecticut College does NOT have any immediate plans for expansion. We have a 750-acre campus in New London that has served the College, the city and the larger community very well for more than 100 years. The bill concerns me because it threatens to inhibit strategic planning and to add costs via approaches unprecedented throughout the United States.

Tax exemption for private colleges in Connecticut recognizes that the education we provide offers important benefits to the public as we pursue our basic missions of teaching, research and service. Such tax exemption has been universally offered and accepted throughout our country's states and municipalities - its basis dating to our country's very founding.

Employing nearly 900 people, Connecticut College stands as a foundation for economic stability in southeastern Connecticut – the third largest employer in New London. Our payroll, including salary and benefits, is \$67 million, approximately one-half of our annual operating budget, and is reinvested into the region by our employees who pay property taxes, shop in local stores, eat in local restaurants, hire local service providers and donate both their energy and money to local charities and community activities.

Connecticut College provides critical resources to our community through the volunteerism of faculty, staff and hundreds of students each year. In fact, community service has been part of the required orientation for the 500 members of the first-year class we enroll each fall – and we have a number of classes that incorporate community learning into the curriculum. Right now, a psychology professor and an architectural studies professor are team-teaching a class that is working with the community to create a small park in Hodges Square to foster a more vibrant community with greater sense of cohesion in a neighborhood spatially segregated from the rest of New London by Interstate 95. This is an example of the way we educate our students for responsible citizenship.

New London schools benefit from the work of both our faculty as consultants and our students as aides, mentors, after-school program and activity coordinators, and tutors. Our students volunteer in more

than 50 community organizations, providing support in areas such as health and wellness, social justice, education, arts and culture, and early child development. The College Arboretum campus is open to the public as are its library and certain of its athletic fields and facilities at selected times.

Connecticut College is a destination for thousands of visitors each year who seek our campus for cultural, intellectual, athletic and entertainment events. They include the families of students and prospective students. They include academics from across the country who take part in conferences, summits and symposia. Many stay in local hotels, eat in local restaurants and shop in local stores. In short, they spend money in New London and the surrounding region.

Connecticut College's overall economic impact in the state, according to the most recent study done five years ago, is more than \$150 million annually in direct and indirect contributions. The number builds from the multiplier effect of spending by our 900 employees, over 1,850 students, thousands of visitors and 1,100 Connecticut vendors (suppliers to whom we have paid \$115 million over the last six and one-half years).

Connecticut College's annual cash operating budget totals \$135 million. Our budget supports the College in many ways that individual citizens are supported by the cities and towns in which they live and, thereby, eliminates the burden from the community. Indeed, Connecticut College functions as a small city with its own safety force, trash collection, snow plowing and road maintenance – even its own power plant.

More than 70 percent of our budget is spent on people, through employee compensation and financial aid grants for about half of our students. Our budget is modest in comparison to that of many of the colleges with which we compete for outstanding students.

The imposition of a significant new charge in the form of taxes on real property to be acquired and on the personal property – scientific and other equipment, furniture, technology – that the College replenishes regularly would only force Connecticut College to curtail funding that supports the very activities for which our longstanding tax exemption has been maintained. In so doing, we will be forced to reduce the base of service and economic support we now offer our city, our region and our state.

I strongly urge you to maintain the real and personal property tax exemptions for private colleges, universities and hospitals in Connecticut.

Thank you.