



Testimony for the  
Appropriations Committee  
Fairfield University President, Rev. Jeffrey P. von Arx, S.J.  
Fairfield University  
February 10, 2016

On behalf of Fairfield University, I, Jeffrey P. von Arx, am submitting testimony in opposition to HB 5044, AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017, which seeks to cut and consolidate the Governor's Scholarship Program .

We are grateful for the legislature's ongoing support of our sector through maintaining funding of the Governor's Scholarship Program.

We understand that the state is facing very significant fiscal challenges and understand that every agency and nearly every program is facing cuts of at least 5.75%. However, please do not cut the Governor's Scholarship any further.

Financial aid allows Fairfield University to address the financial need of Connecticut's poorest and under-served residents. Our most recent graduates (Class of 2015) who received aid through the state of Connecticut bring great diversity to our community, and have also flourished academically. Their average grade point average was 3.30; 33% of the recipients were students of color. Continued cuts and vague requirements on funds distribution will have severe negative impact on the greater Bridgeport community—a community that is a focus for positive change for much of the state.

Our institution's allocation has already been reduced by over \$300,000 since 2013, when the Governor's Scholarship Program was created, and by over one million dollars since 2010. For the 2015-16 academic year, 215 students are receiving aid from the state of Connecticut, down from 350 in 2010-11. Funding from the state of Connecticut helps us aid our neediest students. The average financial need of Governor's Scholarship recipients is over \$50,000, while the average need for our students is approximately \$25,000. Overall approximately 13% of our students are eligible for PELL grants, but over 50% of our Governor's Scholarship recipients are PELL eligible.

These are students that currently make up the nearly 20,000 alumni who live and work in Connecticut. Economic impact figures indicate those alumni earn a combined \$1.3 billion per year, contributing about \$120 million in state and local tax revenues. They are working in fields critical to current and future employers in our state, such as engineering, information technology, healthcare, education, and the life sciences. Additional cuts not only negatively affect their future, but also the future of our town and state.

In closing, we want to serve as partners with the state and provide low-income CT students access and opportunities. Please do not adopt the Governor's recommendations to cut and consolidate this program.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey von Arx, S.J.  
President

