

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

Testimony for the
Appropriations Committee
Victoria A. Hampton, Director of Student Financial Assistance
University of Hartford
February 10, 2016

On behalf of the University of Hartford, I 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 .

As a key partner in the education of over 3,000 Connecticut residents annually, we are grateful for the funding that the state has provided in the past. These students rely heavily on funds from the Governor's Scholarship Program to achieve their educational goals.

We realize that the state is under intense financial pressures and facing cuts in many agencies and programs. That said, we respectfully request that you do not cut funding to this important program any further.

The Governor's Scholarship Program supports over 500 of our neediest students, annually. Last year, this program allowed us to help 384 Connecticut residents who were also eligible for the Federal Pell Grant program. The average family income of those students was approximately \$31,000 per year. Many of these students would not be able to attend the University absent these funds.

Our students have already seen a significant reduction to their awards as a result of the Governor's Scholarship cuts. In 2013, we were able to award approximately \$2.3 million, of which \$2.1 million earmarked for need-based aid. By 2015, that funding was cut to \$1.7 million, of which only \$1.1 million was in need-based funds. This is a reduction in \$1 million to our neediest Connecticut residents over two years.

The University of Hartford contributes to the economic well-being of the state. Almost 60% of our graduates stay in Connecticut after completing their studies. About 90% of our graduates report being either employed or otherwise enrolled in post-secondary education. Reducing the Governor's Scholarship funding would impact the ability of our students to enroll and persist in the attainment of a University education that ultimately benefits the state.

We ask that you DO NOT reduce funding further. We also request that you not give the Office of Higher Education (OHE) greater discretion to determine how much funding is allocated to this program. OHE has significant discretion already and it has led to challenges for students and institutions. Allowing institutions discretion in awarding is in the best interest of our students. It allows institutions to plan and allocate resources in a timely, focused, and equitable manner.

We will continue our partnership with the state to give low-income Connecticut students the opportunities they deserve. Thank you in advance for voting against consolidation and cutting the Governor's Scholarship program.