

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

Testimony for the Finance Committee

Re: House Bill 7408

An Act Concerning Municipal Revenue and Stormwater Authority, Studies of the Pilot Grants Program and Property Tax Exemption for Machinery and Equipment, and Enterprise Zones

April 10, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on House Bill No. 7408: An Act Concerning Municipal Revenue and Stormwater Authority, Studies of the Pilot Grants Program and Property Tax Exemption for Machinery and Equipment, and Enterprise Zones. Specifically, we offer our perspective on Sec. 6 of this bill, which would authorize the legislative body of a municipality to establish a municipal public safety and infrastructure benefit charge to be levied on non-profit entities that own tax exempt property. **Connecticut College is opposed to this provision.**

Connecticut College has called the City of New London home for more than 100 years. The College was founded in 1911, although its history began a few years earlier when the one men's institution in State, which had begun opening its doors to women, abruptly closed them. A committee was formed and towns across the state offered prospective sites for the first women's college in Connecticut. New London won the bid, with a hilltop described as "the finest college site in the world." The City also raised \$135,000 – \$35,000 more than the original goal – to solidify the commitment. Nearly a third of the inhabitants of the city and surrounding communities contributed, including many children, along with virtually every business and organization.

We are proud of our history and grateful for our ongoing partnership with the City of New London. As a not-for-profit institution of higher learning, our mission is to educate students to grow into thoughtful, discerning leaders and engaged citizens. As part of that mission, our students, faculty, and staff are pleased to contribute to the educational, economic, and cultural life of New London through teaching, volunteering, and other forms of public service. And we are glad to share our cultural, social, educational, and natural resources with the citizens of our wonderful city. We are grateful, in turn, for the support the City provides us through essential services such as police protection and fire protection, and for the good relationships that we have been able to develop over the years with municipal leaders.

Today, the College works with more than 50 regional community partners, and its offices and academic departments support New London Public Schools with student teachers, faculty volunteers, and significant grants. We recently helped the City secure \$2.5 million to support the Full Services Community Schools and \$800,000 to support the 21st Century Community Learning Center. More than 100 Connecticut College

students are working with New London Public Schools, and 500 students participate annually in local volunteer and internship experiences.

Connecticut College has also provided longstanding financial support to the City of New London. The College specifically earmarks financial aid for local residents with the Jane Bredeson Scholarship, which covers up to half the cost of tuition for New London residents who are full-time students. Outstanding area high school students also have the opportunity to take one course tuition-free through our New London Scholars Program.

The College has a quantifiable economic impact on the City of New London. The direct impact of our faculty, staff and visitors who own homes in New London and pay taxes, stay in local hotels, frequent local restaurants and businesses and volunteer for local nonprofit organizations, as well as institutional investments, amounted to approximately \$151 million in 2019. This direct and indirect spending results in hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenue for local and State government. In 2018, the City of New London received \$6.2 million through state PILOT and Pequot funds, \$2.5 million of which was directly attributable to Connecticut College.

In demonstration of our mutual support and commitment to working together with the City, the College made a one-time voluntary payment to the City in the amount of \$100,000 in 2018. Most recently, the College's Board of Trustees has made a commitment to pay the City of New London \$250,000 (\$50,000 per year for the next five years) in recognition of the benefits we receive from our host city. The College has begun paying an annual wastewater fee to the City in the amount of \$60,000 in 2018.

All this shows our commitment to the City of New London and to our desire to continue working with City leaders and our community partners. However, if this bill's provision is enacted, we will have to discontinue our voluntary financial contributions to the City. The costs of such a provision would divert critical financial resources from our core mission of teaching and research and limit our ability to provide much needed financial aid to worthy students. Passing such costs onto students would place an undue burden on students and families, compromising their ability to pay for a college education.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to strike this provision from House Bill No. 7408.

Yours sincerely,

Katherine Bergeron, President

Richard Madonna, Vice President of Finance and Administration