



Marketing and Communications

TESTIMONY FOR THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE ON HOUSE BILL 5892

AN ACT ALLOWING MUNICIPALITIES TO ASSESS A FEE ON INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR MUNICIPAL POLICE AND FIRE SERVICES

MARCH 6, 2019

SUBMITTED BY FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY

We appreciate the opportunity to present our views on behalf of Fairfield University on House Bill No. 5892, an act allowing municipalities to assess a fee on independent institutions of higher education for municipal police and fire services. Fairfield University would be one of the universities from which the user fees would be collected and we strongly oppose this bill.

- The institutions' utilization of local police and fire is quite limited. There is no data that indicates that the University is a net user of public services beyond what the University already pays for. Fairfield University pays for police, fire and security services for all on-campus events where these services are required. The University also independently pays for an officer three evenings a week in an off-campus location where student living is prevalent. This officer manages all issues that may arise during those times, and is funded solely by the University. Fairfield University currently spends between \$55,000 - \$75,000 annually on these services.
- The Town of Fairfield has also implemented a recovery of costs ordinance town-wide. This ordinance makes it possible for the Town to collect from anyone who has damaged or violated town property.
- The Economic Impact of Fairfield University is close to \$2Billion dollars annually. Over HALF of the University's alumni base lives in the State of CT (20,000+) with a large portion in Fairfield County and the Town of Fairfield. Our students leave Fairfield, and regularly live and work in the State, bringing significant impact. Our employees and contractors spend significant dollars in the town, and the benefit of our student renter community significantly benefits the town of Fairfield.
- Municipalities throughout the state benefit from the economic impact of having colleges and universities located in their region. The student and employee population at Fairfield University is over 6,000 people, and each person contributes to spending in the local economy. There are approximately 20,000 University alumni residing in the State who contribute to the economic activity in Connecticut. Further, there are many on-campus events which bring visitors to campus and generate several million dollars of spending each year. The direct spending by employees, students, and visitors is estimated to be in excess of \$1,180,702,011.
- Capital projects at Fairfield University have averaged approximately \$10 million each year and require the University to pay building and permit fees. These capital projects benefit the local labor pool and generate taxable revenue. The University also spends in excess of \$58 million annually in purchasing supplies. In the aggregate, the economic impact of the direct and indirect spending of University-related activities equals hundreds of millions of dollars, all of which provide tax revenue for the state and local government.

- Additionally, the University has been undergoing tremendous growth in recent years, and has invested over \$220 Million in new buildings and facilities. Fairfield University creates close to \$15,000 jobs annually.

Fairfield University's contributions to the community and economic benefit, as well as PILOT grant funds (despite not being fully funded) more than make up for the use of local services, which are minimal. The unintended consequences of a bill like this would have a significant adverse impact on all institutions which are assessed the fee.

Fairfield University currently makes significant contributions, financial and in-kind, to the surrounding municipalities and residents. Currently Fairfield University provides pool and space accommodations weekly for the Fairfield Fire Department's ongoing training; we provide both the Town and the State space for canine training; we provide classroom space for training and exams; we provide first-responder housing for families when needed; we provide space to elected officials for town-halls and other group meetings; to name a few. The University is a sponsor of major events in the local community, and provides over 5,000 hours of community services through student clubs and organizations.

Fairfield University has been and continues to be committed to the Town of Fairfield and the State of Connecticut. The University already makes a significant economic contribution to the State, and any fee assessment such as Proposed Bill 5892 would be detrimental to students and divert resources from our core mission. We are empathetic to the fiscal challenges our local municipalities are facing however this proposal of \$500/student would cost the institutions \$500,000 a year. This is not revenue that the institution has and it would force the institutions to pass this fee on to the student and raise tuition.

We strongly urge you to not move this legislation forward.

Thank you,



Jennifer Anderson
Vice President, Marketing and Communications