



**Testimony for the Planning and Development Committee
Re: House Bill 5892
An Act Allowing Municipalities to Assess a Fee on Independent Institutions of
Higher Education for Municipal Police and Fire Services
February 27, 2019**

Submitted by Connecticut College

We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective on House Bill No. 5892: An Act Allowing Municipalities to Assess a Fee on Independent Institutions of Higher Education for Municipal Police & Fire Services. Connecticut College would be one of the institutions from which this fee would be collected.

The College understands the fiscal challenges facing municipalities. However, the enactment of this fee would have an unintended adverse impact on our core mission, and for this reason, **Connecticut College strongly opposes House Bill 5892.**

Connecticut College has provided longstanding financial and in-kind 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. Overall, the College contributes \$7.6 million in financial aid for Connecticut students. The College actively supports local organizations. For many years, the College's faculty and staff has raised funds for the United Way of Southeastern Connecticut. Last April, the College raised \$35,000 at the 11th annual Walk to End Homelessness, benefitting the New London Homeless Hospitality Center.

Connecticut College works with more than 50 regional community partners, and each year, 500-plus students participate in local volunteer and internship experiences. Our Career-Informed learning classes bring together alumni, professors and students who work on solving real-world problems. For example, a Gender and Women's Studies class is working with New London's Immigration Advocacy and Support Center to help build a sustainable funding model. Students are also working on sustainability projects for Stonington's Avalonia Land Conservancy, developing design concepts for the Hodges Square neighborhood, and offering solutions to local small businesses through Fast Forward, a week-long career preparation program.

The College's offices and academic departments support New London Public Schools with grant applications. This includes successfully securing \$2.5 million for the Full Services Community Schools and \$800,000 for the 21st Century Community Learning

Center. More than 100 Connecticut College students are working with New London Public Schools. Programming includes ENRICH, an innovative award-winning partnership with Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School that works with New London middle school students increase strategic reading and language skills; and Kids, Books and Athletics, which promotes reading and physical fitness with New London children. As part of their educational experience at the College, students are encouraged to create community projects of their own. As a recent example, one of our students developed a Learn to Skate program for newly arrived and dual language middle schoolers to introduce them to the sport of hockey.

As a whole, the State benefits economically from having higher education institutions. Connecticut College has created more than 4,800 jobs, and more than 3,400 alumni live in the State. The direct economic 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. Additionally, \$2.5 million of the \$6.2 million received by the City of New London through the state PILOT and Pequot Funds programs in Fiscal 2019 were directly attributable to Connecticut College. And, in demonstration of our mutual support and commitment to working together with the City, the College made a voluntary payment of \$100,000 in 2018. This amount is equivalent to the total amount the College has paid over the last decade. The College also began an annual payment of a wastewater fee to the City in the amount of \$60,000 in 2018.

If this bill is enacted with the amount of \$500 per student, the impact on Connecticut College would be approximately \$922,000. Should the College have to absorb this cost, it would unfortunately divert our resources from learning, research, and our generous financial aid program. If this fee and its related costs were to be passed onto students, it would put further pressure on students and their families' ability to pay for a college education.

Connecticut College wants to continue to be a strong partner to the City of New London and the State. Any additional financial burden, such as the type presented in this legislation, would significantly impact our ability to do so.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you not to move this legislation forward. Thank you.

Katherine Bergeron, President

Richard Madonna, Vice President of Finance and Administration