



Sacred Heart UNIVERSITY

Testimony for the
Planning and Development Committee
March 6, 2019

Sacred Heart University is strongly opposed to H.B. 5892: AN ACT ALLOWING MUNICIPALITIES TO ASSESS A FEE ON INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR MUNICIPAL POLICE AND FIRE SERVICES.

On behalf of Sacred Heart University, I write in strong opposition to House Bill No. 5892. The bill's stated purpose is to allow municipalities to assess a fee on independent institutions of higher education to mitigate the costs incurred for the provision of police and fire services. The idea is to recoup costs for services to these institutions since it is believed that they do not pay their share for these costs, specifically in the form of taxes. Left out of the discussion is the financial contributions Sacred Heart and other colleges and universities make to local municipalities that provide these police and fire services.

Since 2006, Sacred Heart University has contributed \$5.4 million dollars in taxes and permits to local municipalities. The State of Connecticut also makes payments to these municipalities on Sacred Heart's behalf as part of its groundbreaking PILOT program.

There are also countless ways that SHU gives back to the community through direct spending, job creation, volunteer hours, charitable contributions, donations of goods and services and free use of space. Here are just a few examples of the ways we assist first responders:

- SHU offers a **50 percent tuition discount** for first responders who enroll in its Master of Public Administration (MPA) and Master of Criminal Justice programs.
- SHU assisted in developing, reviewing and instituting plans for mutual aid for Bridgeport, Fairfield & Trumbull. These plans have the University offering supplies and facilities, **at no cost**, in the event of an emergency to include relocation of students should an incident occur at one of their schools.
- SHU participates in the CT DHEMS Region 1 emergency planning team, with staff chairing the school safety sub-committee to assist in preparation, prevention and response to a school emergency in the region.
- SHU assisted with developing plans that designate SHU facilities, **at no cost**, as one of the points of distribution for vaccines in an emergency for municipalities, since they do not have that resource.
- SHU's WSHU radio station provides emergency broadcast messages, **at no cost**, to local municipalities during certain emergencies. This is in addition to the official federal emergency messages.
- SHU is providing secure space, **at no cost**, for Fairfield, Westport and potentially other municipalities, for a regional 911 emergency center on University property, potentially saving these communities close to \$1m dollars in costs for space elsewhere.

- SHU has assumed financial responsibility for all maintenance costs of three traffic lights around the University on public roads, to mitigate the costs for other services these municipalities may provide the University.
- SHU is providing training in computer skills, **at no cost**, for Bridgeport Police Department supervisors, as the department moves to computer-generated reports.
- SHU provides state-of-the-art resources and space, **at no cost**, for police training in the area of leadership, investigations, FBI training, active shooter etc.

That said, the discussion regarding municipal police and fire services provided the university would not be complete without a review of the so-called resource drain the community—in this example, the town of Fairfield—suffers as a result of SHU’s presence in the community.

The information below provided by Fairfield Emergency Services reveals the amount of total calls for service Fairfield Fire and Police have responded to each year, the amount of the calls that were for SHU property and the percentage of those calls from the total.

Year	Total Fairfield Emergency calls	Total calls to Sacred Heart University	% of calls
2018	51289	297	.58
2017	50052	282	.56
2016	51477	206	.40
2015	44982	209	.46
2014	44959	191	.42
2013	41184	221	.53
2012	42250	245	.57
2011	41885	237	.56
2010	36337	180	.49
2009	36329	234	.64

The data shows that the actual percentage of calls to Sacred Heart University for police and fire services in each of the last 10 years has been slightly under or slightly over ½ of 1 percent of all the calls for services these agencies respond to throughout town.

As I referenced earlier, the contributions that Sacred Heart makes in the community more than make up for the small percentage of emergency calls to our campus. In addition to the many ways we work with first responders by offering our personnel, facilities and tuition discounts, we make a tremendous difference in the local communities. In fact, the positive economic impact from having Sacred Heart University as a neighbor is eye-opening: direct spending by students accounts for \$85 million pumped into the local economy. Visitors spend close to \$3 million annually in the area, and total direct spending by SHU, its employees, students and visitors is estimated at approximately \$458 million annually. What’s more, 5,565 jobs have been created to support this population and the University.

Students, their families and visitors spend millions of dollars annually supporting the local economy. Our shuttle buses regularly deliver our students to downtown Fairfield where they buy groceries, make purchases at stores, dine at restaurants and support a myriad of small businesses that means income, as well as jobs and new businesses. As you consider whether to assess an additional fee on colleges and/or

their students, please consider all the contributions they are already make to the towns where they reside.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of the letters 'G' and 'M' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Gary MacNamara

Executive director, Public Safety & Gov't. Affairs

Sacred Heart University