

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

Testimony to the
Planning and Development Committee
HB 5892: An Act Allowing Municipalities to Assess a Fee on
Independent Institutions of Higher Education for Municipal Police & Fire Services.
March 6, 2019

Thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts on HB 5892. Let us be direct and to the point: we strongly urge the Committee to not raise this legislation and we will make the case below why it is unnecessary, counterproductive and damaging to institutions of higher education such as the University of Hartford.

The University of Hartford Department of Public Safety is responsible for safety and security on a 350-acre campus that is located within the towns of Hartford, West Hartford and Bloomfield, and two satellite campuses located within Hartford. The Department employs officers who are certified with the State of Connecticut as security officers. Armed officers possess applicable State of Connecticut endorsements. All uniformed officers are Emergency Medical Response (EMR) certified, serving as first responders for all medical emergencies on campus. Officers conduct vehicle, foot, and bicycle patrols on campus and are charged with monitoring and enforcing compliance with all federal, state, and local laws, as well as University policies and regulations. Although not sworn police officers, Public Safety officers provide services to the University of Hartford that are similar in nature to those services provided by municipal police and fire services. Public Safety officers respond to complaints that include alarms, Assaults; Breach of Peace; Community Service; Domestic Violence; Drug and Alcohol violations; Larceny; Medical Emergencies; Motor Vehicle Accidents; Parking Violations; Suspicious Persons; Trespassing; Weapons on Campus; and other requests. The Department of Public Safety maintains an excellent working relationship with the local police and fire departments of Bloomfield, Hartford and West Hartford as well as the Connecticut State Police and Federal Bureau of Investigations.

This bill authorizes municipalities to assess a \$500 per student fee to cover municipal police and fire services utilized by an independent institution of higher education. In 2016 the University of Hartford Department of Public Safety Dispatch Center received 7508 calls/requests for service. Approximately 1744 of those calls/requests for service were of a significant nature that resulted in a University officer completing a case incident number. Incidents that are significant in nature include those involving municipal police and fire services. Of those 1744 documented incidents, local police or fire departments were called by, or initiated contact with the Public Safety Dispatch Center in 152 incidents. Of those incidents,

- 126 incidents brought local authorities to campus property, and
- 75 incidents resulted in the generation of a police report by the responding agency.

In 2017 the Dispatch Center received 7451 calls/requests for service. Approximately 1682 of those calls/requests for service were of a significant nature that resulted in a University officer completing a case incident number. Of those 1682 documented incidents, local police or fire departments were called by, or initiated contact with the Dispatch Center in 153 incidents. Of those incidents,

- 130 incidents brought local authorities to campus property, and

- 84 actual reports taken and documented by police agencies.

In 2018 the Dispatch Center received 7304 calls/requests for service. Approximately 1403 of those calls/requests for service were of a significant nature that resulted in a University officer completing a case incident number. Of those 1403 documented incidents, local police or fire departments were called by, or initiated contact with the Public Safety Dispatch Center 127 incidents. Of those incidents,

- 96 incidents brought local authorities to campus property, and
- 70 actual reports taken and documented by police agencies.

Whenever local police or fire departments respond to our campus, the Department of Public Safety provides comprehensive professional assistance, thereby reducing the time municipal officers need to spend on campus. University officers identify involved persons, obtain statements, and collect evidence for the police agency, greatly reducing the work load of the police agency. University officers perform at a level that far exceeds the service expected of the stereotypical security officer found at shopping centers, parking lots and office buildings. Over the past three years' police and fire assistance at the University averaged 117 responses per year. This represents a minimal impact on those departments when compared to the total number of requests for service answered by them. For example, the Hartford Police Department responded to an average of 207 calls for service (not including officer initiated calls) per day from 2013-2016.

The \$500 per student fee for fire and police services is not specified as to whether it is applicable to fulltime undergraduates, fulltime undergraduates and fulltime graduate students; does it include or exclude part-time undergraduate and part time graduate students? What is the "student" definition? For the University of Hartford, a \$500 fee for all fulltime and part-time undergraduates and graduate students, based on Fall 2018 enrollment, would cost us \$3.4 million a year, nearly three quarters of a million dollars more than the total we now spend on our Public Safety Department. If applied to only fulltime undergraduates, the total annual cost is still a significant \$2.22 million annually, and with University total annual expenditures in the \$180 million a year range, this fiscal shock will have to be made up by reducing financial aid, layoffs or other sharp, negative cuts. We would also note that the City of Hartford receives in excess of \$4 million a year in payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT) based on our presence in the City, while West Hartford receives over \$300,000 annually in PILOT because of our facilities in that town. Again, all reasonable observers and analysts would tell you that neither community incurs costs near those magnitudes because of our being located where we are and yet HB 5892 would now mandate we pay at least \$2.22 million to our host communities for public safety services.

The University of Hartford currently makes significant contributions, financial and in-kind, to the surrounding municipalities and residents. One example of direct assistance is the Hartford Scholars Program. This program provides a 50% tuition subsidy to students who graduate from the Hartford Public schools and Project Choice schools and enroll in the University. Over the past three academic years, this program has benefited an average of 85 Hartford residents a year and provided almost \$1.3 million of tuition assistance each year.

In addition to financial assistance, the University is home to two public magnet schools - the University High School of Science and Engineering (UHSSE), and the University of Hartford Magnet School (UHMS, a CREC school). Both of these schools benefit from the University's direct and indirect contributions to their students and facilities. Specifically, the University offers both schools long-term land leases of \$1 dollar per year thereby saving hundreds of thousands of

dollars a year for the City and other CREC towns. Students at the UHSSE are also able to enroll in courses at the University at no cost. This benefit translates in to approximately \$450,000/year in forgone tuition revenue to the University, or better said \$450,000 savings to area families.

The University of Hartford has been and continues to be committed to the greater Hartford region. The University already makes a significant economic contribution, and any fee assessment such as HB 5892 would be detrimental and divert resources from our core mission. This proposed legislation is presented as good public policy with little or no understanding of what private higher education institutions, such as the University of Hartford, provide in services to students, faculty, staff, visitors and others who come to our campus. The bill, as presented, exhibits a complete lack of understanding of what safety and life support services we provide every day of the year, 24 hours a day, as well as a lack of understanding of the basic business model we employ and the vast array of public services and benefits we offer the host communities we are located in. The bill also has set an arbitrary fee that reason would suggest was picked out of thin air and not derived from any kind of cost analysis. **We would note that we have never heard from the fire and police in our three host communities that we put unwarranted and excessive pressure on their operations. Quite the opposite, close contact is kept with the various departments and a mutually beneficial relation exists.** We respectfully ask that you not move this concept forward. House Bill 5892 will distort and damage good relations that now exist between town and gown across the state. Thank you.

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UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

Economic Impact \$982,316,639

The total economic impact of a university can be measured in terms of the direct and induced economic impact of a university's activity on the local economy.

TOTAL DIRECT SPENDING

\$ 591,828,316

Direct spending is defined as the amount of money spent directly by the university, university employees, students, and visitors.



Direct Spending
by Employees
\$97,923,474



Direct Spending
by Students
\$60,925,044



Direct Spending
by Visitors
\$103,330



University
Purchases
\$52,788,952



Total Value of
Investment Spending
\$6,638,000

INDUCED SPENDING

\$ 390,488,323

The induced economic impact is the additional employment and expenditures of local industries that result because of direct spending.



University
of Hartford
brings opportunity
to the region
7,208
JOBS CREATED



Connecticut is home to
30,281 ALUMNI