

# UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

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Testimony for the  
Appropriations Committee

Victoria A. Hampton, Director of Student Financial Assistance and Acting Dean of Enrollment Management  
University of Hartford  
March 5, 2019

On behalf of the University of Hartford, I am submitting testimony concerning funding for the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program.

The University of Hartford educates over 5,000 undergraduate students, annually, of which 40% are from Connecticut. Many of these students benefit from the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program. In addition to providing financial support, the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program demonstrates to our Connecticut students that the state values them and wants to help them succeed.

The Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program supports some of our neediest students. Last year, this program allowed us to help 198 Connecticut residents, 95 of whom were also eligible for the Federal Pell Grant program. The average family income of those students was approximately \$39,000 per year. Many of these students would not be able to attend the University without this support.

Since 2013, state funding for need-based aid for students attending the University of Hartford has declined by almost 80%. Furthermore, the Roberta B. Willis Need-Merit portion of the funds was not made available to any incoming students for the last two years. As federal funding for financial aid remains relatively flat and the Perkins loan program was eliminated, students are finding it harder and harder to finance their educations. For Connecticut to remain competitive, we must help our students achieve their educational aspirations.

Students who receive the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship are often high academic achievers, with a mean Grade Point Average of 3.01. These are students who can contribute to a better future for Connecticut, if given the support to complete their education. Roberta B. Willis recipients this year include many future engineers, accountants, scientists, artists, and teachers. Helping these students is an investment in the long-term economic well-being of Connecticut.

We will continue our partnership with the state to give low-income Connecticut students the opportunities they deserve. We ask that you uphold your commitment to the success of deserving Connecticut students by preserving funding for this program

Thank you in advance for voting to fully fund, and hopefully increase, the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship program, which is so crucial to our ability to support Connecticut students in their pursuit of higher education.