

**Testimony for the
Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee from
the University of New Haven
April 29, 2019**

The University of New Haven appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony on **SB 1137: An Act Concerning Deposits in Lieu of Taxes** and **SB 1138: An Act Concerning Community Restoration Funds**, both of which seek to require non-profit organizations to pay a fee to the state Treasurer to be utilized by local credit unions to implement certain community restoration and revitalization efforts.

If enacted, the University of New Haven would be adversely and seriously impacted. A fee such as one proposed would prevent the University of New Haven from fulfilling its core mission to educate students. We would be forced to pass on this expense to our students and their families, putting further pressure on their ability to pay for a college education.

The University of New Haven is a proud community partner. We are the Town of West Haven's largest private employer with more than 770 full-time employees. Our annual economic impact is estimated at \$1.4 billion.

Our students, faculty and staff are active members in the local community, working collaboratively with municipal leaders and community groups in West Haven and the surrounding region. These partnerships are providing immeasurable social, aesthetic and economic benefits, which will be diminished greatly if the University is forced to redirect resources to comply with the proposal in SB 1137 and SB 1138.

For example:

- The University sponsors the President's Public Service Fellowship, which places about 10 highly qualified UNH students in non-profits or public service work environments for 11 weeks during June, July and August. Last summer, sites included Integrated Refugee and Immigrant services, the West Haven Community House, the Boys and Girls Club, CitySeed, New Haven Reads, the New Haven Regional Children's Probate Court, Neighborhood Housing Services, New Reach, and the Connecticut Children's Museum. This program is partially funded by federal work-study funds.
- Each spring the University sponsors Alternative Spring Break, a program that gives students the opportunity to do community service for five days. In 2016, students volunteered with New Haven Reads, Habitat for Humanity, the Connecticut Food Bank, the West Haven Child Development Center, Neighborhood Housing Service of New Haven, Christian Community Action, and the Connecticut Children's Museum.
- For three Thursdays during the academic year three staff members and about 155 students disbursed food and clothing to the homeless men and women of New Haven. Each week various student groups collect clothing and food donations to be distributed during their visit that week. In addition to donations sometimes students also prepare a meal for the men and

women. Through the generous support of the University's meal services, Sodexo, hot meals are often prepared and donated during the cold winter months.

- Two University of New Haven political science students work (free of charge) in the West Haven Mayor's Office. Political Science students also conducted public opinion exit polls in 2014 and 2016 for the City asking voters to identify the issues of most concern to West Haven residents and gathering suggestions on possible solutions. They are also conducting an on-going public opinion study on economic development.
- The University is a member of the Allingtown Neighborhood Development Coalition, which consists of local political and neighborhood leaders. Each fall and spring University students participate in a one-day cleanup of the Allingtown neighborhood sponsored by the coalition. The university joined other coalition members to install new awnings on business facades in Allingtown to spruce up the area along Boston Post Road. Students also clean up the Sandy Point Beach regularly. During the 2015-2016 academic year, 160 students participated in the Allingtown cleanups, as well as members from the West Haven Democratic Town Committee and students from Notre Dame High School.

The University of New Haven is also an active partner in supporting area students. For example:

- The University of New Haven collaborated with the City of West Haven and the City of New Haven to construct the Engineering & Science University Magnet School (ESUMS) adjacent to our campus. The school, which opened this spring, serves 602 students from several neighboring towns. The University supports ESUMS students by offering grants to pay for half of tuition at the University. Lower-income students may be eligible for full tuition scholarships to attend the University. In addition, qualified ESUMS students are permitted to take college courses at the University for free prior to graduating from ESUMS. There are also numerous academic collaborations throughout the school year including on-going math and engineering programs for ESUMS students.
- The University of New Haven works closely with West Haven and area high schools to allow qualified high school seniors to attend the university during their senior year without charging any tuition to these students. The University of New Haven also provides special scholarship aid to any student who is a graduate of West Haven High School, and provides scholarship aid to West Haven town employees who attend the university.
- The University's women's basketball program hosts "Class at the Court," an annual event for hundreds of fourth grade students from the Greater West Haven community to introduce the young students to college life. The students tour the University, meet with members of the University community and participate in games that emphasize math and writing skills. The University's student-athletes follow up the visit by going to West Haven schools to reinforce the lessons learned at Class and at the Court.
- University football players participate in Reading Day at Alma E. Pagels School in West Haven as part of a University of New Haven-Pagels partnership. In the fall, the players read to the students, encourage them to do their homework and to dream about college. In the spring, the players return to the school every Friday. They are each assigned a classroom and they mentor students, quizzing them on spelling words or math facts.
- The University provides more than \$730,000 to the City of West Haven through various leases and pays the city \$304,477 in property taxes for non-educational properties.

- The University donates \$100,000 annually to the Allingtown Fire District, and additionally spends \$50,000 to \$60,000 a year on other community services such as sponsorships of festivals and fireworks displays.

We are empathic to the fiscal challenges our local municipalities and their residents are facing. However, the University of New Haven community contributes immensely to our local community. The proposed fee would require a reduction of those programs and lead to increased tuition costs for our students and their families.

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