

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

Testimony to the Public Safety and Security Committee Concerning:

SB 146: AN ACT AUTHORIZING SPORTS WAGERING, ONLINE CASINO GAMING, ONLINE LOTTERY AND ONLINE KENO

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**as Vice President, General Counsel, and Secretary and Interim Director of Athletics
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By way of introduction, and for the record, my name is Maria Feeley, and I am the Vice President, General Counsel, Secretary, and Interim Director of Athletics of the University of Hartford.

Thank you distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the University of Hartford concerning SB 146: AN ACT AUTHORIZING SPORTS WAGERING, ONLINE CASINO GAMING, ONLINE LOTTERY AND ONLINE KENO. If the legislature chooses to move forward with legalized sports wagering, the University of Hartford respectfully urges the Committee to prohibit betting on any collegiate sport or athletics event that takes place in Connecticut or any athletic event in which any Connecticut college or university team competes.

By way of background, the University of Hartford is a private, secular, institution now in its sixth decade, which sits proudly on a 350-acre main campus that includes parts of Hartford, West Hartford, and Bloomfield, Connecticut. The University of Hartford has a robust Division I Athletics program, and provides a distinctive educational experience for its more than 5,000 undergraduate and 1,600 graduate students, offering more than 100 degree programs in the arts, humanities, business, engineering and technology, education, and health professions. The University has become an important educational resource for the State of Connecticut, and its residents.

While the University understands the state's interest and potential revenue stream in legalizing sports betting, the University strongly opposes wagering on any collegiate sporting events or contests in Connecticut or in which any Connecticut college or university team competes for the following reasons:

- Sports gaming jeopardizes the health and welfare of student-athletes and undermines the integrity of collegiate athletics. Student-athletes are young adults who would be subject to additional pressures should gambling be permitted on their sport; they would be vulnerable to act upon external influences, or share information that could impact a contest. For example, they could face pressure to miss tip-offs, face-offs, free throws, shave points, and improperly share medical, academic or other personal information. These additional pressures could also significantly impact the mental health of student-athletes.

- The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) recognizes the threat sports wagering poses to the health and welfare of student-athletes, and thus has strict rules in place concerning same. In fact, violation of NCAA Bylaw 10.3 concerning Sports Wagering Activities can result in permanent loss of eligibility for student-athletes and termination for college or university employees.
- Just as sports wagering jeopardizes the health and welfare of student-athletes, it does the same with respect to coaches and other athletic staff. For example, coaches could be pressured to make decisions that would improperly impact the outcome of a game for gambling purposes, or other staff could be pressured to improperly provide confidential information about a student-athlete's medical or eligibility status. These additional pressures could also negatively impact the mental health of these employees.
- If sports wagering were permitted with respect to collegiate contests, it would require Connecticut colleges and university to increase compliance and other staffing, and earmark additional financial resources to provide increased monitoring as well as training and education to student, faculty, staff, alumni and donors. Additional resources and staff would also be required to address the mental health issues that are likely to arise as noted above.
- If sports wagering resulted in any type of scandal involving a Connecticut college or university, the media coverage would focus on many aspects of the story, including whether the state failed to protect the interests of a young and vulnerable population of student-athletes.

The University of Hartford thanks the Committee for its important work as we strive to ensure all of our students have the opportunity to learn in a safe environment, and, for all of these reasons, respectfully encourages the Committee to prohibit betting on any collegiate sport or athletics event that takes place in Connecticut or any athletic event in which any Connecticut college or university team competes.