

Testimony for the  
Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee  
Sacred Heart University  
March 21, 2022

On behalf of Sacred Heart University, I am submitting testimony in favor of H.B. 5476: AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF PARTIAL FEE REDUCTIONS BY MUNICIPAL STORMWATER AUTHORITIES AND THE INCLUSION OF HEATING, VENTILATING AND AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEMS IN SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT GRANT PAYMENTS, which seeks, in part, to ensure local Stormwater Authorities have a thorough process in place for awarding a fee reduction for properties that invest in limiting or eliminating stormwater runoff. The bill also eliminates the reference to grand list valuation as one of the factors a municipality can consider when determining the Stormwater assessment on a property.

We very much appreciate that the Committee has raised this bill which both incentivizes private investment in limiting runoff on private property and will help limit the exposure that tax-exempt nonprofit institutions like such as Sacred Heart University might have if a city or town were to create a Stormwater Authority. In New London, the only city where a Stormwater Authority currently exists, nonprofit institutions of higher education are paying very high annual fees and it lacks a thorough system for awarding credit.

Sacred Heart University falls into the category of an institution that has invested in stormwater best practices. Over the last 10 years, the University has invested approximately \$6 million in infrastructure and site development specific to storm water detention and management. In concert with the Town of Fairfield's and City of Bridgeport's conservation and engineering departments' requirements, all major capital projects on campus have included design and construction of detention basins, underground detention galleys, waterways, modifications to manmade holding ponds, etc. Our projects meet and/or exceed regulatory mandates and requirements.

Recent project such as our newest residence halls and the ice area that is currently under construction provide for the development and construction of multiple basins to meet conservation guidelines for detaining to a standard of zero increase in runoff from the expected storm events expected in a two- to 100-year cycle. Hydrodynamic separators for grit collection of runoff prior to the discharge to the stormwater basins are also included.

Further, while we are rebounding, the pandemic has not been easy on the finances of nonprofit institutions such as Sacred Heart. Between March 2020 and today, Sacred Heart has seen significant lost revenues. We have invested millions in our testing infrastructure as well as

other safety protocols to ensure we could remain open and keep our students, staff and communities as safe as possible. While federal stimulus dollars have been helpful, they have covered only a portion our expenses.

Given the consensus to significantly increase PILOT funding for municipalities last session—which we very much appreciate—as well as significant federal funding going to municipalities over the next few years, while at the same time nonprofit entities have lost significant revenue from the pandemic, we are very concerned about the consequences of allowing municipalities to assess fees such as these on the property of tax-exempt organizations. Thank you for the opportunity to support this legislation today.

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Sacred Heart University