

# UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

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Testimony for the  
Appropriations Committee

Victoria A. Hampton, Director of Student Financial Assistance, University of Hartford  
February 14, 2017

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

As a key partner in the education of over 3,000 Connecticut residents annually, we are grateful for the funding that the state has provided in the past. These students rely heavily on funds from the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program to achieve their educational goals.

The Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program supports over 400 of our neediest students, annually. Last year, this program allowed us to help 269 Connecticut residents who were also eligible for the Federal Pell Grant program. The average family income of those students was approximately \$33,000 per year. Many of these students would not be able to attend the University absent these funds.

Since 2013, state funding for need-based aid for students attending the University of Hartford has declined by 81%, from \$2,168,070 to \$393,882. Furthermore, the Roberta B. Willis Need-Merit portion of the funds was not made available to any incoming students last year. We understand that the State of Connecticut faces serious fiscal constraints. That said, further reductions in funding will ultimately hurt the state by hindering the ability of our students to enroll and persist in pursuing their education.

Students who receive the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship are often high academic achievers. In fact, the average Grade Point Average of our 2016 recipients was 3.08. Over 100 of these students maintained a Grade Point Average over 3.5. These are talented students who, if given the financial resources to complete their education in Connecticut, will contribute to the future economy of our state. Almost 60% of our graduates stay in Connecticut after completing their studies. About 90% of our graduates report being either employed or otherwise enrolled in post-secondary education. 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 the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship program, which is so crucial to our ability to support Connecticut students in their pursuit of higher education.