



UNIVERSITY OF SAINT JOSEPH

CONNECTICUT

Testimony for the
Appropriations Committee
Ashley R. Dutton
Director of Student Financial Services
University of Saint Joseph
February 14, 2017

I respectfully submit this testimony on behalf of the University of Saint Joseph in opposition to proposed funding cuts to the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program.

We are grateful to the state legislature for its ongoing support of the private college sector and for maintaining funding in the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program. We also recognize that the state of Connecticut faces fiscal constraints and that tough decisions must be made. However, this program provides crucial financial support for needy state residents to enroll and persevere in higher education within the state of Connecticut. Continued encouragement to pursue education in state is vitally important to creating and supporting a highly educated workforce.

Funding for need-based aid for students attending the University of Saint Joseph has declined significantly. From 2015 to 2017, our institution's allocation has been cut by 38%, from \$700,318 to \$269,237. We implore you not to reduce the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program funding any further. With a highly diverse and economically needy student body, this reduction directly impacts extremely talented students. More than a third of our students are Pell-eligible, and more than half are from under-represented ethnic or racial groups.

With pending cuts looming, uncertainty has developed as we cannot assure returning students that we will be able to renew funding. We also cannot award funding to all eligible recipients. This is detrimental to the state's future workforce, including nurses, teachers, and social workers, in their efforts to graduate from the University of Saint Joseph. Please grant our request and help to keep an affordable college education within the grasps of our Connecticut residents.

Thank you for your consideration.