



**Testimony for the
Appropriations Committee
Tracy Y. Espy, Ph.D., President
Mitchell College
February 15, 2023**

On behalf of Mitchell College, I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on **H.B. 6659: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR**, with support to increasing funding for the **Roberta Willis Scholarship Program** by \$4 million, 12%, in both FY 24 and FY 25, as has been proposed by Governor Lamont.

I thank the legislature for continuing to fund the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program, which provides needs based financial aid through scholarships, affording many Connecticut students the opportunity to earn a degree.

The Roberta Willis Scholarship program is a critical component of the financial support that Mitchell College students receive, supplementing their aid from the federal government and from the College itself. Mitchell College students, received \$136,953 in Roberta Willis Scholarship funds for the 2022-2023 academic year. These funds were awarded to 53 of our students, though another 198 were eligible based on financial need.

Mitchell College provides quality education and expert supports to our students, who represent a wide spectrum of diversity in race, gender, class, ethnicity and neurodiversity. Over a third are first-generation college students. For many of our students, financial aid is what makes earning a degree possible. In fact, 95% of our students receive financial aid.

With regard to CSCU's proposal to expand the PACT program to the Connecticut State Universities to make certain 4-year in demand degrees free, I ask you to consider the serious impact to Mitchell College were the state to provide funding to make one sector free. Increasing funding directly to students through programs like the Roberta Willis Scholarship Fund would allow Connecticut students to go to the Connecticut college or University, public or private non-profit, that best suits their needs and goals.

We hope the Committee will support the Governor's proposal to increase funding to the Roberta Willis Scholarship Program, and we hope that any additional funding to expand the pipeline for certain in-demand degrees will include opportunities for students to attend both public and private, non-profit colleges in Connecticut.