



Trinity College

Hartford, Connecticut

**Testimony for the
Appropriations Committee
Joanne Berger-Sweeney, President
Trinity College
February 20, 2023**

On behalf of Trinity College, I am submitting testimony on **H.B. 6659: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFORE**, pertaining to funding for the **Roberta Willis Scholarship Program**. Governor Lamont has proposed to increase funding for this program by \$4 million, 12%, in both FY 23 and FY 24.

By way of background, the Roberta Willis Scholarship Program is the state's need-based financial aid program administered by the Office of Higher Education that provides scholarships to needy Connecticut students to attend Connecticut institutions—public and private. State residents attending our local independent colleges reflect 40% of the total state post-secondary enrollment; yet, they only receive approximately 17% of the total funding available from this program.

The appropriation for this program has been flat for over ten years and therefore we strongly support the Governor's proposed increase.

The Roberta Willis Scholarship Program is an important component of the financial support that Trinity students receive. In FY23, Trinity benefited from the program by providing just under \$50,000 of need-based financial aid; which assisted 12 students. This leaves a portion of our eligible Connecticut resident students unfunded. In fact, across Connecticut's higher education institutions, the funding provides an opportunity for only 27% of eligible CT students to receive a state need-based grant in FY20.

Of note, Trinity must express some concern about the CSU's proposal to make certain 4-year in-demand degrees free through an expansion of the PACT program to the Connecticut State Universities. Trinity would be severely impacted if the state were to provide funding to make one sector free. Trinity enrolls many Connecticut students and those students have often been found working in the state after graduation at the same rate as the CSU graduates.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joanne Berger-Sweeney".

Joanne Berger-Sweeney, President and
Trinity College Professor of Neuroscience