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The Honorable Senator Catherine A. Osten  
Co-Chair, Planning and Development Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 2100  
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Representative Philip J. Miller  
Co-Chair, Planning and Development Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 4011  
Hartford, CT 06106

Members of the Planning and Development Committee  
of the Connecticut General Assembly

Re: H.B. 6965 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRESERVATION OF  
MUNICIPAL TAX BASES

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding this proposed legislation. I am the Vice President for University Relations at the University of Bridgeport. We have approximately 5200 students and while they come from 37 states and 80 countries across the globe, each year our domestic undergraduates are predominantly from Connecticut. We take great pride in being an institution that welcomes first generation college students with aid—scholastic and financial—that prepares them to immediately enter the workforce after graduation. Many of our students remain in Connecticut to begin their careers.

Last fall, we completed an economic impact study that confirmed what we believed. The University of Bridgeport is a significant economic driver in the city of Bridgeport as well as the state of Connecticut. The university, its alumni, faculty students and visitors contribute \$65 million dollars to the city of Bridgeport. We produce 2.6% of the city's revenue yet account for only 1.3% of the city's expenditures.

Because we are a career-focused institution of higher education, we work with our community to provide internships, clinics and service projects to our students. More than 51,000 volunteer hours valued at \$2.1 million enhanced our student's growth and the fabric of our city last year. On our annual day of service for the Martin Luther King holiday, over 300 students packaged 40,000 meals that were delivered to local

food banks. We provide all of the dental screening to children in the Head Start program. We offer no or low cost clinic visits to the community. In fact, there were over 17,000 of those visits last year.

We do this because we believe in our students and our city. We do this despite a student population that is disproportionately low-income. Financial aid is a life-line to our students, a significant portion of our budget and a top priority for us. We are proud to be able to do this.

The University of Bridgeport is all too aware of the precarious economic situation of our city and understand keenly the need for additional revenue. So too do we appreciate the budget constraints at the state level. We are deeply concerned about the changes proposed in this bill as well as other proposed legislation that will impact our ability to grow, thrive and deliver a workforce ready to contribute to Connecticut's economy and success. How are we to stay current or improve our facilities and also provide financial aid if our purchases of personal property are to be taxed? In Bridgeport we are the anchor and we are one of the only economic drivers in the South End. How can we partner with developers to stabilize or create housing that serves the community and our students if those initiatives will raise our taxes? It will diminish our ability—significantly—to provide the aid our students require.

On behalf of the University of Bridgeport and as a resident of the city, I urge you to preserve what we have today: a vibrant, growing, contributing asset to a city who desperately needs it.

Again, thank you for your consideration.