

Testimony for Public Hearing
Appropriations Committee
Mike Trafecante
Fairfield University
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Good evening. My name is Mike Trafecante and I am the Vice President for Finance and Treasurer of Fairfield University.

I am here to express deep concerns and strong opposition to the Governor's budget proposal which, beginning fiscal 2016, seeks to exclude from the Governor's Scholarship Program students who reside in Connecticut and elect to attend private colleges in the state. What message would this action send...that the poor and middle class students who currently benefit from this aid are less important than their peers?

While we understand that managing the state's financial situation is always a delicate task that requires difficult choices, the impact of this proposal, while certainly impacting Fairfield University, its 5,000 students and their families directly, has far greater impact on the future economic well-being of our state.

Today, close to 20,000 of our alumni are Connecticut residents. They are working in fields critical to current and future employers in our state, such as engineering, information technology, healthcare, education, and the life sciences. Economic impact figures indicate those alumni earn a combined **\$1.3 billion per year**, and that they contribute about **\$120 million in state and local tax revenues**.

It is important to bear in mind that the funding we are discussing today is used to **support students from middle and low-income families**, and not the institutions.

I'd like to review with you information on how the proposed cuts would impact our current student population. Fairfield University currently enrolls **284 students -- who receive CICS or Connecticut Governor's Scholarship financial support -- 8% of our undergraduate student population**

The total state support from these funds to the eligible Connecticut students this year was slightly more than \$1 million. Over all, Fairfield University awarded over \$8.5 million in need-based, institutional aid to Connecticut students - **this is more than any other private institution in the state.**

A look at our 2014 graduating class provides additional insight into the recipients of this aid. **Forty-nine students received aid from this program. Their average grade point average was 3.28; 50% were students of color.** The average need of

the class of 2014 recipients was \$49,900, and the average award they received was \$5,500.

These are the cold, hard facts and statistics, and I know that the committee is fully aware of the importance of a college education and the multiple benefits reaped from it. But, behind these figures are smart, talented student residents from our state and their families who have hopes and dreams of a bright future that greatly depends on attaining a college degree and due to the weakened economy, need help to achieve their goals. The proposal under consideration could destroy those dreams and have an enormously negative impact on our state's economy for years to come.

I urge this committee to see this legislation for what it is, a **bad idea** and to continue to invest in these students and in the future of Connecticut by stopping this proposal from becoming law.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak before this distinguished committee this evening and I thank you.