

UConn Health Testimony – 2020 Appropriations Committee Meeting

Ryan Englander

Hello ladies and gentlemen of the Appropriations Committee. It is my distinct honor to address you today regarding the crucial importance of UConn Health as an asset to the state of Connecticut.

My name is Ryan Englander. I grew up in Suffield, Connecticut, a small town in the north of the state, and I am currently a second year MD/PhD student at the University. I have been in the UConn system for the entirety of my educational career thus far – I received my Bachelor's and Master's at the University of Connecticut-Storrs and have spent the last two years at UConn Health. During that time, I have been intimately involved in clinical education programs and basic science research, both at UConn Health itself and at the Jackson Laboratory on campus. I have worked in labs at UConn Health studying the immune response against cancer, developed novel gene editing technologies utilizing CRISPR/Cas9, and I will be working at the Jackson Laboratory this summer studying a novel strategy for developing targeted immunotherapies in a variety of cancer types.

In my personal experience, the University, and UConn Health in particular, is a unique and potent attractant for the young talent that this state will need to compete and succeed in the increasingly technology- and healthcare-dominated economy of the coming years and decades. Through my experiences in clinical education, I have seen how the groundbreaking educational strategies being perfected at UConn Health are attracting the best aspiring young medical professionals this country has to offer, individuals who tend to stay in the state and enrich it with their expertise and knowledge. Through my experiences in research, I have seen firsthand that the strength of the University is attracting the top scientific minds from across the country who are carrying their brilliant ideas here, to *this state*. These big ideas are where innovation comes from, and it is innovation more than anything else that drives new economic opportunities and growth.

Connecticut sits between the massive biomedical centers that are rapidly expanding in Boston and New York. That provides us with an unprecedented opportunity to form a crucial part of a biotechnology corridor that will be at the forefront of launching the American economy to new heights. Not only can we participate in this period of growth, but through strong and sustained investment in UConn Health, the state of Connecticut has an opportunity to send a message that we are going to be *leaders* in that process.

The question of whether to continue investing in UConn Health is often portrayed as a choice between spending money now to receive returns later or not spending the money at all. This dichotomy is false. The University's leading position as a top-tier national innovator is producing returns *right now*. Top physicians are coming to the state of Connecticut because of the strength of our flagship institution *right now*. Groundbreaking research is taking place at the University, at the Jackson Labs, and at UConn Health *right now*. That research is *currently* producing new biotech companies that are starting in the state of Connecticut *right now*. Investment in UConn Health is not something that is just going to pay off five, ten, twenty years down the line, though it will also do that. Investment in UConn Health is paying off *right now, today*.

I recognize that the Appropriations Committee is juggling a lot of different priorities, as occurs with any budgetary process. I hope I have conveyed today how central UConn Health and the University of Connecticut in general are for Connecticut's growth as we head deeper into the 21st century. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to address you all today. It has been an absolute privilege. Thank you.