

Testimony of
DR. PENGHUA WANG

Before the
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

February 18, 2020

RE: UCONN HEALTH BUDGET

My name is Penghua Wang, Assistant Professor in the Department of Immunology at UConn Health. I appreciate the Appropriation Committee members for holding this hearing and the opportunity to share my testimony.

I have been living in Guilford since I came to the United States in 2006-14 years. I worked at Yale for 9 years and then was away from Connecticut for three years, when my family was still in Guilford. My family and I love Connecticut. Thus I always want to come back to Connecticut. I chose an opportunity at UConn Health in 2018. Besides the family reason, an important factor that drew me to UConn Health is its research-intensive environment, state-of-art infrastructure and uprising research impact.

I am very pleased to see that the biomedical research is booming in Farmington, due to the growing impact of UConn Health. I see that the Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine is doing well, and another medical complex (near the Munson Rd) is under construction. I feel optimistic that Farmington is going to be another biomedical hub in CT. These facts underscore the importance of state support to UConn Health and the success of state investment in biomedical research.

Another issue I would like to draw your attention to is the extremely high fringe rates caused by unfunded pension and healthcare liability. I run active research in the field of viral immunology and inflammatory diseases, ultimately seeking new therapeutic approaches to treating important human disease conditions such as viral/autoimmune arthritis and Zika/dengue virus infection. My research is currently supported by NIH grants. The fringe rate at UConn Health is much higher than anywhere else I know. For example, the fringe benefit for one employee in my lab is at least \$15,000/year more than his peers with the same salary at Yale University and New York Medical College. This significantly reduces the amount of funds to research, rendering me less competitive than my peers. I sincerely urge the members of Appropriation Committee to consider this issue seriously, which will result in UConn research growing faster and becoming more competitive in the nation.