

Testimony of: Marina Zoghbi
School of Dental Medicine, Class of 2021

Good evening,

My name is Marina Zoghbi and I am a resident of Farmington. I grew up in Coventry, Connecticut, and graduated from Coventry High School as valedictorian. I attended the University of Connecticut in Storrs for my undergraduate education and graduated in the Honors Program. I am proud to now be a third year student at the University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine.

Every time that I reflect on the other dental schools that I received acceptances from, I know that I made the best decision in choosing to attend UConn Dental. UConn's M Delta curriculum, which we took alongside the medical students, has prepared me to care for my patients as an entire individual – not just their mouth. I am grateful to have received a superb biomedical science education from faculty who are experts in their field. Now that I am in clinic, I see the gratitude on my patient's faces when I review their medical history and medications and have an understanding of their condition. This past year, we implemented a new diabetes screening protocol. We are able to perform a rapid blood glucose test for our patients who may be at risk for diabetes, and refer them appropriately to receive the care they may have otherwise neglected. This is just one example of how UConn Dental is improving the health of Connecticut. Our patients in the student clinic are among the most vulnerable in our state who would otherwise struggle to find a provider or neglect their dental health. At UConn Dental, we are lucky to have a low student to faculty ratio that allows us to receive the best training and provide high quality care to these patients. It is imperative to continue to support UConn Health so that we can continue to attract exceptional faculty and maintain the excellence of our education.

Through UConn I have been able to give so much back to the community already. I have been a member of the Connecticut Area Health Education Center Network Urban Scholar Program since I began dental school. This program has given me advanced training in interprofessional collaboration and caring for vulnerable populations including veterans, LGBTQI, and the homeless, and countless outreach opportunities including dental screenings at the Willimantic Soup Kitchen and the Parker Memorial Health Fair in Hartford. The summer after my first year, I served as a student coordinator for Connecticut Area Health Education Center Network Migrant Farm Worker Clinic where we provided dental screenings to farm workers who play an integral role in Connecticut's agricultural economy. This year I have served as a student coordinator for the South Park Inn homeless shelter in Hartford where we provide screenings to the residents of the shelter. All of these screenings and referrals for comprehensive care are crucial in improving the health of Connecticut's vulnerable citizens and reducing the number of

individuals who would ultimately present to the emergency department. By investing in UConn Health, you are investing in a healthier, more productive society.

I have served as the Legislative Liaison for UConn's chapter of the American Student Dental Association for the past two years, and was picked to serve as the District 1 Advocacy Chair for UConn, Boston University, Harvard, Tufts, and the University of New England dental schools this past year. Through this role, I have energized my classmates to contact their representatives in support of legislation that protects our patients, and our profession. I have also had the opportunity to work with the Connecticut State Dental Association and attended the American Dental Association Dentist and Student Lobby Day in Washington, D.C. this past April. These dentists have shared with me the reasons they love practicing in Connecticut and have encouraged me to do the same. They have shown me the importance of being involved in organized dentistry to maintain that Connecticut remains a great state to practice dentistry. The Connecticut State Dental Association loves meeting our students and assuring students that practicing in Connecticut will be incredibly fulfilling. As a student advocate and future dentist in Connecticut, I want to ensure that our state is attracting the best dental professionals for our community. Investing in UConn Health is vital to recruiting top-notch providers to work and open business in our state.

I would like to thank the committee for holding this hearing and allowing me to testify. I hope that through my testimony I have conveyed how important investment in UConn Health is to the well-being of our citizens, and well as our economy. Thank you to the General Assembly for your past support and I hope that you will continue to support UConn and UConn Health.