

**Testimony of Kodi (Udeh) Baldino  
UConn School of Medicine- Class of 2021**

**Appropriations Committee  
2/18/2020 Public Hearing**

**RE: UConn Health Budget**

Good afternoon/evening. My name is Kodi Baldino and I am a 3<sup>rd</sup> year medical student at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. Thank you for holding this hearing and giving me the opportunity to share my testimony today. I would like to start by thanking the General Assembly for the support they have given the UConn Health community, and therefore, students like me.

While I have only been at UConn Health as a medical student for the past three years, I have been receiving support from the UConn Health community for over a decade. I was born and raised in West Hartford, CT, just a short drive away from the UConn Health Center, and began to gain interest in medicine as a sophomore at Hall High School. At that time, I was introduced to the Health Career Opportunity Programs (HCOP) offered at UConn Health. Through this program, I have been able to witness the way your support has allowed UConn Health to remain an institution that values innovation, research, and the education of future and current medical students.

My first visit to the UConn Health Center campus was as part of HCOP's High School Student Research Apprentice Program. I spent the summer after my sophomore year of high school working with graduate students at UConn Health, learning basic science techniques and was given the unique ability to learn about the medical field at this young age. From that point forward, I participated in these programs offered through UConn Health nearly every summer until I finally entered medical school. These programs exemplify UConn's commitment to its mission statement, which include clauses on the advancement of knowledge and provide educational opportunities to Connecticut residents. Additionally, this commitment is part of what led me to choose UConn as my #1 choice for medical school.

Over the past decade, I have watched the UConn School of Medicine evolve to include the newest technology in medical education, and implement a curriculum aimed at creating team-focused physicians. From the new Virtual Anatomy Lab to the Clinical Simulation Center, both available to all medical students, it is clear that UConn values education, and is willing to put a significant amount of funding towards it. My older sister matriculated into UConn School of Medicine two years prior to my matriculation. I remember that she would take me around the Health Center, showing me not only where she had classes, but also, the new (and under construction at the time) facilities that would be available to me if I were accepted. She told me about the research opportunities she was provided, and shared stories about her favorite professors and experiences in the anatomy lab. The commitment that was shown by UConn Health to furthering my education as early as high school, in conjunction with the experiences of my sister, solidified that UConn School of Medicine would be the right choice for me. My sister will be finishing her intern year and transitioning into her first year of Ophthalmology residency at NYU this summer. She also participated in the HCOP programs prior to entering medical. She hopes to

come back to Connecticut to practice following residency to practice, and serve as a mentor to high school and college students participating in these same programs. I will be entering the match next year, and hope to stay in Connecticut to do the same.

The support provided to UConn Health has allowed numerous students like my sister and I to develop an interest in, and pursue medicine as career. At the same time, UConn Health's commitment to me as a student has led to a mutual commitment to the institution, and a desire to give back to the community. I hope that your support for UConn Health will continue to grow, allowing for the production of medical professionals like me, who plan to serve the Connecticut community.