

**Testimony of Christopher Bessette
UConn School of Medicine- Class of 2023**

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

RE: UConn Health Budget

My name is Christopher Bessette, and I am a first-year medical student at UConn School of Medicine. I would like to thank you for your past and continued support of UConn Health, and for taking the time to allow us to testify today.

I am what's usually called a nontraditional medical school applicant; I took four years after my undergraduate education at the University of Pennsylvania to study public health and work in health policy in Washington, DC. I am also somewhat nontraditional because I come to medical school with a background as a chronic disease patient, having lived with Type 1 Diabetes since my 18th birthday.

Both of these parts of my life are enormous reasons why I chose to pursue my medical degree at UConn. During my time with the US Department of Health and Human Services, I saw firsthand the devastation that decreased access to, and affordability of, care causes patients. And as a patient, I've experienced both amazing and incredibly disappointing physicians. My takeaway from all of these encounters is the importance of not only strong scientific understanding, but also empathetic physicians trained in how to communicate with their patients and communities.

I believe that UConn Health exemplifies a commitment to solving these issues. By maintaining access to a world-class medical school with the benefit of in-state tuition, UConn serves to increase opportunities for students like me to begin and maintain our medical careers in our home communities. And as a leader in improving medical education through changes such as the MDelta curriculum and first-day clinical experience, I can comfortably say that my classmates and I are learning not only to be doctors wise enough to find the correct diagnosis, but also compassionate and empathetic enough to help patients through what are often some of the worst and most stressful days in their lives.

State funding for UConn Health is critical for allowing students like me to come home and begin to give back to my community as a clinician, as well as for ensuring the health of Connecticut's most vulnerable populations. I ask that you please do everything you can to ensure that the backbone of Connecticut health receives the funding it needs for years to come.

Again, thank you for taking the time to hear from us today, and thank you for your support.