

Bridget Oei
Student Testimonial
January 20th, 2020

Good afternoon, my name is Bridget Oei and I am a first year medical student at UConn School of Medicine. I have lived in Connecticut my whole life, attending UConn for my undergraduate years, earning a degree in Environmental Chemistry. I want to thank the committee members for this hearing and allowing me to share why UConn Health is the very heart of the state and its health and well-being.

One of my current classes is called "Clinical Longitudinal Immersion in the Community (CliC), where I visit a pediatrics office in Connecticut every week. I work with a pediatrician who oversees my work and challenges me to see patients on my own and develop good patient care plans. At first, I felt very intimidated to be seeing patients, but truly the experiences I have had caring for the patient community have changed my life. One day, a patient came to see me and I spoke with them about their history and their current concerns. The patient wanted to talk about vaping. The patient had been vaping for several years now, but had developed a frustrating cough, and wanted to know if they were related. I had, in fact, just learned about vapor associated pulmonary injury, and how dangerous vaping is being found to be for someone's health. We've all seen it on social media, in the news, etc. It is quickly becoming a public health crisis. I had also recently learned the steps to counsel patients on smoking cessation. So, sitting with this patient, I thought "this is my moment...this patient needs me." For the next hour, we engaged in a discussion about what each of us knew about vaping, what we did not know, and I was able to elicit the concerns and thoughts of my patient who was someone who never stopped vaping, unless asleep. By the end of the visit, my patient had built a calendar with goal dates: to slowly cut back on vaping, and eventually eliminate vaping all together. Since then my patient has updated me on his success, and I have been lucky enough to watch my patient grow in confidence and in health as he took his life back.

When I began medical school, I thought I would be tucked away in some classroom, for hours and hours, hidden from the clinical world until I had learned every illness and drug out there. However, that is not the way UConn's medical school teaches, nor is it the way UConn supports its next generation of health care providers. Instead, UConn places us in the community from the first day. Pushing us to learn in real time, interact with our community, and see first hand the needs of our patients not just from a textbook, but face to face. Challenging us to not only be doctors, but also sensitive, conscientious parts of the human experience of health and disease.

I am no hero, and I do not think I ever will be. I did not save this patient's life in any grand way, but I did something. I sat there and I listened, I used my knowledge base, and I supported my patient. I consider myself the luckiest individual to be able to interact with CT's population as a health care provider. I would not have been there that day to speak with that patient about vaping if it weren't for UConn Health. The resources that UConn demands are given right back into the community, even at the level of the students like myself. The learning that I am doing now, will translate into the quality of care that I will give to every one of my patients. And it is at

UConn Health that I am receiving the quality of learning, giving me the opportunity to become the best doctor I can be for my community. And Connecticut is my community. I am confident when I say that Connecticut holds a special place in my heart. The patients I have worked with so far in my career have proven to me time and time again that the CT community deserves the best health care. I want to see my state healthy and successful, and I want to play my part in that as a provider.

I urge you to consider allocating everything that you can to UConn Health: to the future of medicine, and to the patients that we care for. Thank you.