

Dear Appropriations Committee,

Thank you very much for your time this evening and the opportunity to speak before you. My name is Ghalib Shaikh, and I am a second-year medical student at UConn Health. I am originally from North Stonington and attended Wheeler High School. Thank you for your past support of UConn Health, and I hope to convince you that this investment has been worthwhile.

UConn has many attractive features as a medical and dental school. First and foremost, as debt burdens at universities across the country grow out of control, it is important to have an option for a quality medical education at a more reasonable cost to students. But when I say quality education, what does that mean? What does UConn do well? Beyond the cost factor, what makes it important to support UConn Health?

Well, the theme at UConn Health is team-based learning. This has been reflected in the curriculum, in the student body, and in the faculty. This is a school where you feel supported. This is a school where you feel that you are part of a team, and where everyone else *wants* to be on that team too. The students I've encountered are enthusiastic about learning, enthusiastic about working together, friendly, and humble. I have never encountered anyone here who gave off the impression that they did not appreciate the opportunity they had been afforded. The faculty I've interacted with personally have all been generous with their time and have taken the time to make learning difficult skills fun and engaging.

This emphasis on teamwork extends beyond the medical school itself. Unlike many medical schools, we spent our first year and a half with dental students. We form friendships and connections that might not otherwise happen if we were in separate silos. Our school is also in the same building as the hospital and research facilities, so we have easy access to form connections with mentors further down the career pathway or with researchers studying a topic we may be interested in. I myself had the privilege of doing neuroscience research this past summer, and I enjoyed working with people who bring a different skill set to the table to try to reach a common goal of understanding a disease better.

These are not qualities we should take for granted. The funding that you provide helps make sure that we can hire and retain faculty - many of whom are products of this school themselves - that are passionate about the topics we learn. Our students come here with a variety of specific interests and a lot of energy, and the funding to UConn Health ensures that the school has the resources necessary to support these students in pursuing their passions. Those passions ultimately benefit the state and the local community. When a student who is really interested in laboratory research utilized their student research funding to contribute to research and publish a paper, that makes UConn and Connecticut look good. When a student who is really interested in community health invests their student research funding to evaluate a new program to alleviate healthcare disparities, that benefits the local community. When those same students complete their training and perhaps join the faculty here, they pass what they learned on to another 100+ future doctors. In other words, the investment that you make in even just one

student here at UConn Health compounds to benefit the local community immensely over the years.

I hope I have shown you the good that can be done with your support of UConn Health and its schools of medicine and dental medicine. Thank you again for your time today.