

**Testimony of Victoria Stoj
UConn School of Medicine- Class of 2021**

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

RE: UConn Health Budget

Members of the Appropriation Committee,

Hello- my name is Victoria Stoj, and I am a member of University of Connecticut School of Medicine class of 2021. I am currently on a research year taking classes at the graduate school in the pursuit of a Masters in Public Health, which I hope to receive upon graduating from medical school. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to share my experience with UConn Health and hopefully shed light on the importance of adequate funding for scholars and future medical practitioners like myself.

I'd always hoped to go to UConn for medical school. I grew up in Vernon, CT and my parents are both practicing physicians in Manchester. My father went to medical school at UConn, and he always regarded his time here well. Even when I left the state, albeit not too far away in Boston, advisors from my undergraduate university spoke highly of the unparalleled clinical education one receives at UConn.

In the time I've been a student here I've had the opportunity to learn and grow as a student, academically and clinically, as well as develop essential skills to become a researcher, advocate, and leader. Since the beginning of first year I was able to work with populations in need at the South Park Clinic, a student-run clinic in a homeless shelter in Hartford. Not only has the clinic served as an opportunity to practice clinical skills learned in the classroom, but as a student-run clinic, it has allowed me to understand how to organize a functional medical clinic as a member of the board. The experience has helped me hone skills necessary for practical decision making and leadership. In addition to my personal development, South Park is often the first point at which these patients enter the medical system. They are frequently referred to clinics at UConn Health, which, as the only public academic medical center in the state, cares for the neediest and most vulnerable in our state, often when other providers do not.

Opportunities like the South Park Clinic not only enhance a student's clinical and leadership skills, but they also reinforce the importance of advocacy for aspiring physicians in the community. Between time spent at South Park and the emphasis on social determinants of health in the medical school curriculum, I found myself drawn to public health. Last year I learned it was possible for me to pursue this passion as a medical student without the burden of extra tuition. This opportunity has allowed me an affordable option to learn more about the communities and systems in which I hope to serve as a practicing physician.

Apart from clinical skills and advocacy, both of which enhance the educational quality at the medical school, research skills and technology are of paramount importance to the constantly growing and evolving field of medicine. This year I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity to be involved in the clinical trials research performed in the dermatology department. It has allowed me to work with some of the most advanced treatments even before they have been released to the market. It has acquainted me with the latest technology and understanding of disease. None of this would be possible if funding was not allocated to research at the institution. I now have the opportunity to present some of my own research at the Women's Dermatologic Society in just a few weeks, and I hope to continue to contribute to the scientific community as a physician.

Ultimately the school has done a lot for me, but I don't know if any of the above programs I'd mentioned would be possible without appropriate funding. I truly hope to give back to the community which has given me so much, and I hope generations of future physicians will continue to feel similarly. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you regarding the value of UConn Health and for your ongoing support for its financial health.