

**Testimony of
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**Before the
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
February 18, 2020
RE: UCONN HEALTH BUDGET**

I thank the members of the Appropriations Committee for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to speak this evening. I also thank the General Assembly for their past support. I am here today as a primary care clinician member of the UConn Health family to ask that your support continue unabated.

I come before you as a citizen of Middlefield, CT, as well as an employee and faculty member of UConn Health. I joined UConn Health in 2012, having sought a position in academic medicine after two decades of fulltime clinical practice in Middlesex County. I was drawn to UConn Health – in particular to the School of Medicine - because of its excellent reputation at a public institution dedicated to the production of highly skilled and empathetic health care providers, many of whom dedicate their careers to the care of destitute and underserved populations. I came to UConn Health with the understanding that it was the ONLY public academic medical center in the State dedicated to the provision of care for the neediest and most vulnerable people in our State.

I have the distinct advantage of seeing how incredibly impactful a UConn Health education can be from a multitude of positions and perspectives including: patient care provider and preceptor in the UConn Family Medicine Residency Program; instructor and course co-director in our new and highly effective team-based undergraduate medical/dental curriculum; and as an administrator with oversight of Student Affairs issues and Student Wellness programming. Such diversity of roles and responsibilities, fully supported by an involved and accessible Dean, has allowed me substantial insight into the great and lasting value of a UConn Health education.

What has impressed me most is UConn Health's unwavering support of the production of primary care providers, an ongoing process of which our Dean is hugely supportive. An example of this support has manifested itself in the formation of our Primary Care Loan Program which was designed to support the aspirations of UConn School of Medicine students interested in a career in primary care. For each year of the program, which can accommodate up to 4 students per year with a maximum duration of support of 3 years, a substantial low interest educational loan is provided in exchange for a year of service practicing fulltime as a primary care physician in CT.

Perhaps the most impressive manifestation of UConn Health's dedication to understanding and serving our neediest state residents is our Urban Service Track, a program of the Connecticut Area Health Education Center. UST Scholars, who are drawn from 6 different healthcare disciplines, follow an interprofessional educational track designed to support students who are interested in working in urban and underserved settings. UST Scholars receive targeted education on how to take care of vulnerable

populations such as the elderly, homeless, veterans, and refugees and are given ample opportunity to apply their newly acquired knowledge and clinical skills in a variety of community settings in areas of high medical need.

UConn Health has for years been proactive in exposing students to primary care settings early in their medical education. From year one students are set up in a weekly continuity clinic that they attend through their third year, with an option to continue through to graduation. This experience allows students to truly appreciate what it is like to work in an outpatient setting, develop patient relationships, and maintain continuity of care. This program, combined with dedicated faculty mentorship, has inspired countless numbers of students to choose a career in primary care.

All told, the UConn School of Medicine is a state medical school whose dedication to the professional development of in-state residents has been unwavering. If we want to invest in future health care and in keeping physicians in the state we need to continue to support our campus. Right now students from Connecticut represent a great majority of the classes and UConn Health is truly the most vital institution for our next generation of doctors. UConn graduates of the School of Medicine contribute significantly to the state physician workforce.

UConn Health and its School of Medicine is on the cutting-edge of medical education, thanks in large part to your support. Your continued support of the School of Medicine is a crucial investment in a new crop of physicians who will advance the quality of healthcare in the state because they see beyond the history of present illness and treat the patient in the larger context of their medical and social history.

Please support UConn Health and its mission to serve our students and all of our Connecticut citizens with cutting edge medical care focusing on our citizens' needs rather than on their ability to pay, which is likely not to happen if we "partner" with a private enterprise. I feel strongly that UConn should remain public, and free to fulfill its intended mission. Give us the chance and we will continue to make you proud. State funding for UConn is a wise and practical investment in Connecticut's future.