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Edgar Tapia, Lead Transport Aide
UConn Health Center
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Committee, my name is Edgar Tapia and I am a Lead Transport Aide at UConn Health Center. I have been working here for more than 20 years. In 1996 I began working at UConn as a valet. Some patients would ask to work with me specifically when I helped them get in and out of their cars. Several healthcare professionals noticed the way I treated patients with compassion, and recommended that I apply to be a transport aide. Since I became a transport aide in 1998, I have been able to work with the patients more closely, which is what I enjoy the most about my job.

I am here today to ask that you continue to fund UConn Health Center. Since we are the only state-run hospital in Connecticut, we are the ones who provide quality treatment to Medicare and Medicaid patients. Private hospitals are able to discriminate against patients that are insured by Medicaid. Public hospitals also help keep healthcare costs lower in the state, as privatized hospitals are more expensive, but do not demonstrate better results. I also feel that it is very important to protect state jobs and opportunities for families to thrive in Connecticut.

As a transport aide, I help move patients by wheelchair from their inpatient beds to different locations throughout the health center. I love the fact that I am helping people in my job, and by the end of the day I have a feeling of satisfaction knowing that I was able to help people. Short staffing and understaffing can make this job difficult. During a single shift, one transport aide will complete anywhere between 20-30 patient calls. We also do specimen rounds every hour to get materials around the hospital. The minimum staffing for first shift is six aides, which is currently the norm. Two years ago, it was more common to have 7-8 aides on at a time. As I wrote this statement, there were only five transport aides working on first shift. At the end of the day, our feet hurt. We walk between six to eight miles in eight hours. Proper funding would help alleviate staffing issues so we can continue to serve our patients.

Please continue to fund UConn health for the years to come, and protect our state's only public hospital. Thank you.