

## Testimony

(February 18, 2020 Budget Hearing on Higher Education)

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representatives DiMassa and Horn, and members of the Appropriations Committee;

My name is Rob Smith and I am a graduate student, researcher, and teaching assistant at the University of Connecticut. I am a member of the Graduate Employee Union (GEU-UAW Local 6950). I grew up in Coventry Connecticut (House District 8, Senate District 35)

Sufficient funding for UConn is critical to the future of the state. It should be seen as an investment because UConn generates outside revenue and entrepreneurship but also because it educates residents and attracts young people to live and work in the state.

In my department, civil engineering, we bring in millions of dollars in outside research grants. We also perform work for the state, such as creating new cost-effective methods for bridge repair, developing tests for crumbling foundations, developing infrastructure resiliency plans for to deal with the changing climate, and gathering data for transportation planning. On the depot campus, UConn runs the most advanced pavement lab in New England, which develops road management schemes and trains professionals from our state and around the region on how to save resources building better roads.

UConn is an economic engine for the state and, along with our state colleges, provides important opportunities for affordable education. I attended a private college for undergrad and it was expensive and I often felt on my own. UConn provides support for students transitioning from community college, veterans, students with children, and students who are the first in their family to attend college.

There is often debate on how UConn spends its funds. If this is a concern of legislators, I would suggest imposing measures for greater oversight instead of cutting funding, which will only hurt the students and the state. Please do not let the financial mistakes of the past impact future generations.

Thank you



Rob Smith