

Dear Honorable Appropriations Committee,

My name is Avinash Bidra, and I serve as Clinical Professor and Director of the Post-graduate residency program in Prosthodontics at the UCONN School of Dental Medicine and I live in Farmington I also serve as 1 out of only 3 Maxillofacial Prosthodontists practicing in the state of Connecticut. My subspecialty is involved in the rehabilitation of patients with missing upper and lower jaws, teeth and parts of the face that have been destroyed or damaged due to head and neck cancer or trauma.

I have volunteered to speak to you today because I feel it is the responsibility of the great State of Connecticut to support the mission of its only state-supported dental school. UCONN School of Dental Medicine as you know, is regarded as one of the premier dental schools in the world providing general and specialty oral/dental care for the citizens of Connecticut, producing world class cutting edge research to advance dentistry, and producing the next generation of dentists who will practice and serve the current and future citizens of Connecticut.

In my 10 years of service at UCONN School of Dental Medicine, I have had the privilege of educating many hundred students, over 25 post-graduate residents and supervising dental specialty care in prosthodontics for thousands of patients. For many of these patients, UCONN School of Dental Medicine is the only option available for dental care. Many of our patients in our clinic travel long distances within the state and often wait for many months to seek care at our clinic. This is primarily due the reputation of the school, the affordable cost and the superb quality of dental care provided by the prosthodontics residents. For Head and Neck cancer rehabilitation patients, the Prosthodontics program which I direct, is the only source of care in the State of Connecticut. We fabricate oral prostheses such as maxillary obturators, soft palate prostheses and mandibular resection prostheses, without which these unfortunate patients will not be able to eat, speak or swallow. By providing support to UCONN School of Dental Medicine, the State of Connecticut can directly influence the quality of life of such patients.

From a research standpoint, I would like to share with you 2 seminal pieces of work that my team produced, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the first time, we were able to test and prove that a diluted oral rinse of povidone-iodine was able to completely inactivate SARS CoV-2 ("Coronavirus"), the virus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of these publications, dentists, ENT surgeons and ophthalmologists around the world have instituted protocols to keep patients safe in practices. I was the lead author on both these scientific articles and believe that the scope and academic freedom provided by UCONN School of Dental Medicine played a tremendous role in producing this research. Several of my colleagues at UCONN have produced seminal such research. Therefore the support provided by the State of Connecticut is invaluable!

I urge the committee to support UCONN Health and UCONN School of Dental Medicine and by supporting UConn Health, you are supporting the oral health of the citizens of State of Connecticut, growth of the state economy, advancing medical/dental sciences, and supporting improved health outcomes for over 1 million patient visits per year.

Thank you for your consideration and time,

Best regards

Dr. Avinash S. Bidra

Program Director and Maxillofacial Prosthodontist

Clinical Professor, Post-Graduate Prosthodontics