

**Testimony of Ruby Blackmon, AFSCME Local 196
Regarding the Governor's proposed budget for the UConn Health Center
March 4, 2021**

Good evening Chairwoman Osten, Chairwoman Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Ruby Blackmon. I live in New Britain and have recently retired from my position as a processing technician at Central Connecticut State University.

I am also the President of AFSCME, Council 4 Local 196 which represents 450 state administrative-clerical workers in this region, including more than 275 staff at UConn Health. Together, we are asking you to support the Governor's funding proposal in his proposed budget. UConn Health Center deserves even greater funding so that we can maintain UCH as Connecticut's flagship teaching hospital.

The members of AFSCME Local 196 are the administrative backbone of our great public hospital. They are often the first person that visitors see and will interact with everyone in the hospital including patients, families, doctors, nurses and more.

AFSCME Local 196 members are the administrative backbone of our great public hospital. They interact with everyone who touches this hospital, including patients, families, doctors, nurses and so many more. For the last several years, front-line workers have been concerned about the possibility of the health center being privatized. UConn Health is the state's only public hospital and provides many benefits to our citizens, including many who cannot afford treatment at private hospitals.

We have continuously been partners in protecting UConn Health and serving our communities. In our view, "Public-Private Partnership" is a fancy term for privatization. Privatization will undermine the public mission and public obligation of this great university as well as risk negatively impacting the services provided. We are asking for a moratorium on any privatization for any facility for at least 2 years. This will allow management and labor an opportunity to work together to adjust for the cost of Covid-19 and a future when the pandemic is in the past. The 2019 budget contained language advising the UCHC administration to explore the possibility of a public private partnership. They did that and none was found. We respectfully ask that you include the moratorium proposal described above in this years biennial budget to assist the UCHC in moving forward to a more innovative and cooperative future. On behalf of AFSCME Local 196 and all the union members here today, please work with us to keep UConn Health operating as a public hospital that serves the public good.

Thank you.