

My name is Nichali Bogues, and I am a junior studying Biophysics & Structural Biology at the University of Connecticut.

Before sharing, I would like to thank the committee members for holding the hearing and also for giving me this grand opportunity to share my perspective and my story on why funding for programs supporting first generation to college students are critical.

I migrated to the United States from Jamaica during the summer of 2017 as a rising senior at Bulkeley High School in Hartford, when I had to learn to adapt to a first world country and pick up the pace of the American society. This was a really tense time for me. College applications were due soon, I knew I wanted to attend college, but did not know how to go about it, especially in a new environment.

Soon I met a friend who was also from Jamaica and was a part of a program in our high school, the UConn College Access Preparation Program (UCAP). This program was a blessing for me. As a first-generation college student, I did not have anyone at home who could prepare me for college, and the UCAP program was instrumental in helping me. The program leader, Christina, helped me every step of the way with my college applications and financial aid. The UCAP program supported me as I applied to several colleges to study biology, so I could start to pursue my dream of being a Cardiothoracic Surgeon. Amongst many acceptances, I decided to attend the University of Connecticut because of their reputable undergraduate and medical program and the affordable cost.

As I started my journey at UConn, I came across many life changing opportunities such as the McNair Program and the Louis Stokes Alliance Minority Participation (LSAMP) Program. Alongside my peers in these programs who are first generation college students from high need households and self-identify as underrepresented racial or ethnic groups, I have been exposed to opportunities, including extensive research exposure, preparation for medical school, and mentorship from professionals in a variety of STEM backgrounds. These programs create innovative investigators across STEM fields while also providing professional development. These programs provide a well-rounded opportunity to get hands-on research experience, exposure to the fields of our dreams, and advancement of our social capital. Because of the support from McNair and LSAMP I will fulfill my dream of becoming a surgeon.

Investing in UCAP, LSAMP, McNair, and other programs that support underrepresented students is essential for a better Connecticut. It gives Connecticut the ability to enhance its economic growth and prosperity through the hands of research. This will attract some of the brightest and best minds to the state.

I see myself being an innovative scientist that will be striving to help create a healthier 2030 and this vision is supported and motivated by the Programs at UConn that ignites the desire for

underrepresented students like me to do better. As Benjamin Franklin said, “an investment in knowledge pays the best interest.”

Thank you.