

Testimony of Dr. Anna Dongari-Bagtzoglou, DDS, PhD
Before the Appropriations Committee

February 25, 2021

RE: UCONN Health/School of Dental Medicine Budget

I am writing to you as a resident of Cheshire Connecticut as well as as a senior member of the faculty and Department Head of one of the three Departments in the School of Dental Medicine. The school of Dental Medicine has been my academic home since 2002 when I joined as Assistant Professor. Over the past almost twenty years at UCONN I have enjoyed and contributed to a job environment that nurtures and supports faculty and student growth and development. Having personal knowledge about many Dental schools both nationally and internationally I can assure you that this supportive environment is a distinguishing characteristic of our school which undoubtedly contributes to its **academic excellence and top ranking in scholarly productivity, extramural research and clinical infrastructure funding**. A particularly impressive fact considering its small full time faculty body (~60 full time faculty) the School maintains an upward trajectory in extramural funding with \$10M new funding and more than 120 publications just in FY 2020. We proudly maintain a **strong tradition of fostering junior faculty development and the training of the next generation of dental faculty, general dentists and specialists**. The School of Dental Medicine consistently attracts top faculty and students, due to its enormously positive national and international reputation, and is listed as a top ten school for quality affordable education nationally.

As the only Dental School in the state the school plays a critical role in training the next generation of the dental workforce with **over 80% of our dental students being from Connecticut**. Our student body has grown by 30% in the past couple of years without a commensurate growth in the number of clinical faculty. We also provide affordable or free dental care for the State's less fortunate and more vulnerable citizens who are turned away from private practice settings. Although COVID has put an extra financial burden on our operating budgets, with strategic cost reductions and revenue enhancements, we have made great strides in addressing this crisis. We have also **provided dental services to our communities operating at 100% level for the past 9 months in the midst of a pandemic**, while maintaining a safe environment for faculty, staff students and patients.

We are requesting to maintain our block grant funding and to fund the unfunded legacy costs in the next two fiscal years, which has been plaguing our budgets.

We need to continue our upward trajectory of growth and our unwavering service to the citizens of Connecticut. With your support I am convinced that we will be able to do so. Thank you for this opportunity.