

Chair Osten, Chair Walker, vice chairs, ranking members, and distinguished members of the committee,

My name is Michael Hernández and I am honored to be a student at UConn and serve as the Student Body President. Three years ago, I was one of dozens of undocumented students speaking before many of you in support of the Afford to Dream Act, which passed and gave me the opportunity to attend UConn. Today, I am testifying in strong support of investing in Connecticut students like myself by restoring much-needed funding to UConn in the coming fiscal years.

My journey to UConn was unlikely. As an undocumented 10-year-old from Honduras moving to Stamford in 2008, the path to college and career was always uncertain. However, I was always certain that my supportive Stamford community would take me to supportive places like UConn where I am currently pursuing a dual degree in the Honors Program in Political Science and Economics. My professors, mentors and fellow students have supported my research, studies, and participation in the Newman Civic Fellowship, the Public Policy and International Affairs program at Carnegie Mellon, and the University of Miami Law School Summer Legal Academy. I have brought these experiences back to Stamford and applied them by designing a community project and securing funding to increase enrollment in the city's Advanced Placement Program, by contributing to the city's census count in 2020, and other efforts related to education accessibility, civic engagement, and urban development. My senior thesis will focus on the politics and economics of urban development in Stamford from 1960 to 2020. My academic journey is inextricably linked to the journey of Stamford, and now the journey of the state. I plan on living in Stamford the rest of my life--I have been supported as a student by the city and the state, so I know that I will be supported as a resident, worker, and father in the future.

Every time the state has invested in UConn we have seen tangible results such as historic application records, increases in research and scholarship, our first Rhodes Scholar, and I can proudly say that I am UConn's first non-citizen Student Body President. These and other accomplishments at UConn have restored Connecticut residents' faith in the economic future and development of the state. Today, the state must restore funding to UConn to ensure that future.

Thank you for supporting my journey to UConn and I strongly urge all committee members to support the journey of all future Connecticut students by restoring funding to UConn.

Thank you for your time.
Michael Hernández