

# WORKING FOR A BETTER UCONN

UCONN Graduate Employee Union  
United Auto Workers, Local 6950  
1734 Storrs Rd. Storrs, CT 06268



Testimony of Joseph Iovine on behalf of the

Graduate Employee Union Local 6950  
United Automobile Workers of America (GEU-UAW UCONN)

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing  
Thursday, March 4, 2021

In support of: H.B. No. 6439 (Comm) An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023, and Making Appropriations Therefor

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representatives Dathan and Nolan, and members of the Appropriations Committee;

My name is Joseph Iovine, and I am both a graduate student and Research Assistant at the University of Connecticut and a member of the Graduate Employee Union (GEU-UAW Local 6950). I am a second year in the MCB department, currently working on research and the education of undergraduates in our lab. I am writing to testify on the Budget Hearing for Higher Education.

Support for UConn is an investment to develop a highly skilled workforce for the state. In my teaching/research/advising work with undergraduate students, I prepare them for further higher education (graduate school, medical school, etc.), help them foster skills that are crucial for scientific research, and directly impact local communities by training the next generation of scientists.

As a graduate student studying Molecular and Cell Biology, my UConn graduate degree will prepare me to conduct scientific research, an important skill that prepares medicines and therapeutics for the state of Connecticut. The value of this particular skill should not be understated in today's current environment, one where the hard work of many researchers and clinicians in developing/administering vaccines protects the well-being of all of Connecticut's residents against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Support for UConn directly stimulates Connecticut's economy, providing jobs throughout the state, bringing and keeping faculty, staff and their families to Connecticut, and driving

innovation and entrepreneurship in the state. Graduate Assistants (GAs), for example, generate \$250 million per year in grants and contracts from federal agencies like NASA, the Pentagon, NSF, and NIH, as well as from state, local and private sources. UConn generates \$11.80 into the state economy for every dollar spent, adding up to \$15.2 million in state and local tax revenue.

I moved to Connecticut solely to facilitate my responsibilities as a GA at UConn, and thus have contributed to this state's economy by contributing toward these high-value research grants. Furthermore, GAs make affordable, quality education possible for 20,000 children of CT families. Nearly 1400 Teaching Assistants are lead instructors for hundreds of courses and discussion and lab sections that provide the critical face-to-face interaction for 20,000 undergraduates who receive a quality, affordable education each year.

UConn is a vital asset to the State of Connecticut. In the past, the state budget has provided generous support to UConn's important mission of providing education, service, and research to the state and residents of Connecticut, and I strongly encourage you to continue this generosity in the next budget.

Sincerely,

Joseph Iovine -- Graduate Assistant  
Mansfield, CT