



Area Health Education Centers

Southwestern AHEC

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March 3, 2021

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Fernando Morales. I am Executive Director of Southwestern Area Health Education Center, Inc. SWAHEC is one of the 4 regional centers that makes up the CT AHEC Network with a program office at UCONN School of Medicine, which together provide statewide coverage. Each center serves a distinct area of the state.

I am writing today to urge you to support funding in the Governor's Proposed FY 2022-2023 Budget for AHEC. I want to thank you for all you do for the state of Connecticut and your past support of the Connecticut AHEC Network.

The AHEC (Area Health Education Centers) program was developed to improve health care access through the training, recruitment, and retention of diverse health professionals committed to helping underserved populations. By applying academic medicine resources, the AHEC program aims to contribute to addressing local community health needs.

For the past 20 years, the Connecticut AHEC Network has successfully leveraged collaborations and partnerships with key stakeholders focusing on Connecticut's health care workforce. We have been dedicated to reducing and eliminating health disparities by collaborating and creating partnerships with organizations that aim to improve healthcare access both nationally and statewide.

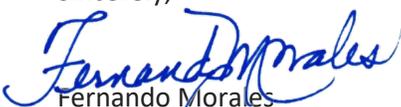
AHEC's **mission and goals** directly support healthcare workforce development in the state:

- Developing and supporting community-based inter-professional training opportunities for health professions and pre-health professions students.
- Recruiting underrepresented minority and disadvantaged students into the health professions.
- Partnering with community organizations to address local health issues.
- Providing continuing education that improves the care received by vulnerable populations.
- Providing outreach to underserved communities.

With the COVID-19 Pandemic, the CT AHEC Network quickly mobilized health profession students where they were needed most, including volunteering at testing and immunization sites, providing outreach to isolated senior citizens locked out of their senior centers supporting youth forced to pivot to online learning.

I urge you to support funding for AHEC in the State of Connecticut now and in the future. Thank you.

Sincerely,


Fernando Morales