

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
March 4, 2021

Thank you to the committee members for holding this hearing and for allowing my written testimony to be included. Thank you to the General Assembly for your past support of UConn Health's budget.

My name is Elena Navedo, and I am a second year medical student at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine and I live in XXXX. I would like to take a brief moment to explain how funding for UConn Health has allowed the University of Connecticut School of Medicine to support me as I study to become a physician and a few of the ways that, through this financial support, Connecticut will benefit from this investment in its medical students

What first drew me to UConn was the energetic, welcoming culture that I saw here that I hadn't seen at other schools. When I came to interview, it was through the Health Career Opportunities Program (HCOP) that I was invited to meet with a then first year student who was Puerto Rican, like I am. I was struck that HCOP would go out of their way to pair me with a medical student that I could identify with and who could share their experience with me and help answer any of my questions. HCOP, and the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, provided that comradery, community, and high-quality curriculum that led me to choose UConn School of Medicine over my other options.

Now as a second year medical student at UConn, my colleagues and I have already begun giving back to the community that has supported us so much over the past two years since beginning our studies. As co-president of the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA), when the COVID-19 pandemic began, our organization focused our attention on supporting our communities both within the medical school, UConn Health, and the Connecticut population at large. In addition to numerous smaller events to build moral during the pandemic for our student body, LMSA focused heavily on advocacy. LMSA recently hosted a Phone-a-thon in mid-January to support State Senator Saud Anwar's bill to declare racism a public health crisis. On January 13, over 190 calls were made to state senators and representatives in support of this bill. It might seem this is slightly off-topic for a budget hearing on UConn Health, but if it weren't for the support we received as medical students from our school, we truly wouldn't have had the bandwidth to do this work for our great state of Connecticut. If it weren't for the resources from scholarships, new equipment, funding for the online platform and tech support for the switch to online classes that was provided by the School of Medicine, we (medical students) would have been too overwhelmed to take on this additional work. Finally, through the UST program, Urban Service Track, I participated in a calling campaign to survey Spanish-speaking senior citizens for appropriate access to resources and health care during the pandemic and connect them to resources in their area.

In conclusion, the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, and by extension Health Career Opportunities Program and UST, is putting in the work necessary to support the next generation of diverse physicians that will care for our community for years to come. This work requires funding in order to accomplish our ambitious goals, and I humbly request that the General Assembly move to continue or increase support for UConn Health and the University of Connecticut School of Medicine.

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