

# WORKING FOR A BETTER UCONN

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



Testimony of Elena Robakiewicz 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 Elena Robakiewicz, and I am both a graduate student and teaching assistant at the University of Connecticut and a member of the Graduate Employee Union (GEU-UAW Local 6950). My research looks at climate's impact on human evolution and migration in Africa, but I teach UConn's introductory geosciences course. This course provides an extremely diverse set of students an introduction into earth sciences and allows them to grow into informed, concerned global citizens regarding the wellbeing of our planet. I am writing to testify on the Budget Hearing for Higher Education.

Support for UConn is an investment to develop a highly skilled set of critical thinkers for the state by providing a strong education for a diverse set of students. Introductory Geology tends to be one of the only science courses students non-STEM students at UConn take. With the current climate crisis, citizens are not separated from the devastating impacts of climate change. In my course, I teach undergraduates how to read data, look at their environment, and provide awareness of their role within our Earth system. We foster skills to make sure that students can understand what is scientifically factual and what is disinformation. Such skills are critical amongst our young people as they prepare to enter the workforce and make an impact on our world.

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,

Elena Robakiewicz  
GA/TA within the Department of Geosciences

Coventry, CT  
[elena.robakiewicz@uconn.edu](mailto:elena.robakiewicz@uconn.edu)