

Good evening,

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee, I am Kelly Burke, an Assistant Professor of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering. I work in the School of Engineering, and I am also a member of the Polymer Program in the Institute of Materials Science. I joined UConn in August following completion of a National Institutes of Health (NIH) Postdoctoral Fellowship.

Thank you for listening to me, and for all of your support for the University of Connecticut.

We understand the challenges you face in reducing the budget deficit, and we are grateful that you are working diligently to address this.

However, the recommended budget released last week creates a gap of approximately \$40 million between the state funding and what is needed to operate the university next year.

A reduction to the appropriation in that amount would without question have a devastating impact on our ability to prepare our students to be leading researchers and innovators in Connecticut.

As a new faculty member, I teach classes and support a research lab. These deep cuts would reverse the progress made at UConn and deeply hurt my ability to train students, both undergraduate and graduate, to be independent researchers. One of the reasons I stand here today is because I had the opportunity to conduct undergraduate research. These experiences inspired me to be an engineer, to pursue a doctoral degree and postdoctoral training, and to “pay it forward” by mentoring students and providing them with the skills that they need to achieve their goals. My undergraduate institution, the place where this inspiration happened, was the University of Connecticut.

We are so grateful for the support the state has provided. One of the reasons that I accepted the position at UConn was the dynamic investment that the state has been making. Initiatives like Next Generation Connecticut, the Tech Park, and Biosciences Connecticut are directly applicable to my research. It's such an exciting time to be at UConn. These initiatives are poised to equip us with cutting edge instrumentation, to facilitate pivotal collaborations with industry and academics, and attract top students, staff and faculty. These initiatives will not meet their full potential, however, if we are not able to support them in the future.

At a time when other states were not investing in their state flagship, our legislature made strategic investments and that is what enabled us to achieve the amazing progress discussed by President Herbst earlier today. Such a dramatic cut in the budget now will hobble our progress.

I cannot stress consequences of this cut enough: this will have **devastating effects** our students, our research programs, and the role that UConn will play in our state's future. This University makes amazing and lasting effects on students, and we need your help to keep doing that.

Thank you very much for listening.