

My name is Ian Fignon and I am here with the UConn College Democrats and as a student in the Honors Program at the University of Connecticut.

Today I am here to state my opposition to the cuts to education included in Malloy's proposed budget for the 2016 fiscal year. While I understand the need to ensure the efficient use and maximization of educational funds, the current \$40 million shortfall for the University of Connecticut is not acceptable. What makes our flagship state school so unique is the high quality public education it provides to Connecticut residents at a low cost. Raising the tuition will only make it harder for those pulling themselves up and further our state's wide income disparity.

My main reason for attending the Honors Program here, instead of those at prestigious private schools, was not an issue of acceptance, but of cost. When my mother brought my sister and I to America from our homeland of France, she worked as hard as she could as a flight attendant to give her children the chance to succeed. In high school I received Highest Honors every quarter, served as my class's vice president, and ran indoor and outdoor track. Despite my GPA and resume, however, money still presented an obstacle.

At the University of Connecticut I am a sophomore studying Political Science. Already I've been across the east coast for conferences surrounding drug policy. I've lobbied at both our state's capitol and our nation's capitol. I've worked at the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research as a research assistant, analyzing, coding, and interpreting polling data. Here, at UConn, I've even gotten to talk with Wiktor Osiatynski – a man involved in developing the Human Rights Institute and in writing the Polish constitution.

None of my academic success in college would have been possible if not for UConn's affordable tuition. I urge the Connecticut General Assembly to prevent these budget cuts since they will inevitably fall on students like myself who are already weighed down by loans. Raising UConn's tuition will only place an even larger burden on the middleclass and further push the university to target out-of-state students rather than Connecticut residents.

As an immigrant and as the son of a single mother I know how important hard work is in laying the foundation for future success. However, our state cannot expect individuals to do this alone if it wants an educated and capable workforce for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Do not slash education for the sake of the 2016 fiscal year, for far more than numbers are being debated here. The lives of those striving to further themselves in the classroom, to participate in research firsthand, and to achieve the American Dream are in the balance.

Thank you for your time.