

**Appropriations Committee
February 10, 2016**

**Testimony of Valentina Savath
3rd Year Student, UConn School of Dental Medicine**

Re: UConn Health Budget

Good Afternoon.

Co-chairs, ranking members, and members of the committee, thank you for hosting us here today. It is truly my pleasure to speak on behalf of my classmates as a part of this panel. I am Valentina Savath, a third year dental student at UConn and a resident of New Haven.

I'd like to start with a sincere thank you for your incredible support for UConn Health and the students training in Farmington. Through state investments in UConn Health, to investments in our Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine, you have made UConn a great university that is making a real difference through community service, training the next generation of healthcare professionals, and providing quality care to thousands of patients in the state.

I, like Jon, have spent my entire life in Connecticut. I was born in New Britain, raised in Bristol, graduated from Yale University, and currently training at UConn Dental. I am also a former employee of UConn Health's Center on Aging. CT has invested so much in me, and I'm on my way to giving back to the community.

I'd like to tell you about my patient Pat, whom I'm currently making dentures for. Her dream is to be able to eat one of her favorite meals once she receives her new dentures. Like many patients, Pat chose to put her faith in UConn Health to fulfill her dream. Pat recently switched all of her healthcare providers to UConn Health providers with the belief that she will be receiving quality comprehensive care. I fear that deep budget cuts will threaten the care that Pat and other patients like her will be able to receive. My patients come to me from outside dentists, seeking better care than past providers or simply trying to find a provider that will accept them. UConn Dental, and all of UConn Health, truly serves as the safety net provider for individuals with limited or no health insurance. In fact, over 61% of the patient visits to UConn Dental are Medicaid patients. I worry about what deep budget cuts will do to this safety net; where will these patients who have no other place go to receive their care? Not only will this reduce access, but it will ultimately cost the State more if these patients cannot get good preventative care.

I wouldn't be the budding clinician I am without programs supported by the state. One of these programs is Connecticut AHEC's Urban Service Track (UST), a program run

out of UConn Health. In addition to the Dental School curriculum, the UST program has allowed me to learn about underserved populations alongside students in the Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy, Nursing, Social Work, and Quinnipiac University's Physician Assistant Program. Enhanced learning opportunities through UST have been highlights for me personally and professionally. I know that other students feel the same way and see UST as an integral part in our training as health professions students at UConn. It is programs like these that enticed me to come to UConn Health to train, and also encourage me to stay in the State and give back to the community.

In closing, I understand the task before you is daunting, but I urge you to find a way to restore the proposed cuts to UConn Health. Continuing to investing in UConn Health means that citizens of Connecticut, patients like Pat, will continue to get the care they need. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you, and I welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,
Valentina Savath