

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I'm writing this letter in support of our CT Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Network and the amazing programs and work accomplished throughout the state, addressing health care workforce needs and providing middle and high school students an award winning health career recruitment program. It is imperative that funding for the CT AHEC Network be restored to \$400,643 in the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Budget.

For the past 20 years the Connecticut AHEC Network has linked local communities with the resources of the University of Connecticut, its Health Center and other academic institutions and health professions training programs. The CT AHEC Network provides Connecticut residents with critical resources that are both timely and essential in developing a health care workforce through its collaboration with more than 200 community based partner organizations.

Programs like our **YHSC** (Youth Health Service Corps) is an award winning health career recruitment program that engages middle and high school students in quality service learning projects that address pressing community health issues. Through service, YHSC members explore health careers while acquiring real life experience working with under-served populations in community health care settings. YHSC members now number in the thousands with volunteer hours to match.

The Youth Mental Health First Aid (**MHFA**) Corps is an innovative AmeriCorps program that engages the AHECs and other community based organizations to support widespread implementation of Youth Mental Health First Aid™ in communities across the nation. With the awareness of mental health, this program is crucial to promote the importance of mental health and to help remove the stigma associated with those living with mental health issues.

This is just a small sample (but large effect) of the impact the Connecticut AHEC Network has in our beautiful state. Within its limited funding, the Connecticut AHEC Network reaches a significant number people across the state. To be able to continue our important work, I am respectfully requesting that AHEC funding in the amount of \$400,643 be restored to the AHEC line item in the Higher Education and Workforce Advancement budget.

Jorge A. Martinez, Jr
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