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My name is Emilyn Tuomala, and I am a second semester freshman from New Milford, Connecticut. When it became time to pick colleges which to apply, UConn was not at the top of my list. Out of the nine colleges I applied and were accepted to, eight of them were \$40,000 a year or more. George Washington University was my top choice, with a ghastly cost of \$69,719 per year. It was my dream to go, a fact made obvious by all the GWU posters over my room. Of course when it came down to decide which college I would ultimately attend, I adamantly fought my parents- I had no idea how much of a toll college tuition would cost my family. When we were discussing which prices were feasible, their answers came as a shock. If I were to go to any college besides UConn, I would graduate \$150,000 in debt or more.

I was shell-shocked, with no prior idea of what was affordable. The funds needed were just not there. My brother was in his last semester as a college senior. My mother just finished her 092 certification, bringing large student loans, in the hopes of finding a new, higher paying job. My stepfather had been facing two chronic illnesses for the last fifteen years that led to \$10,000 each year for medical procedures and copays- I had no idea. UConn was the college I had to go to, for the sake of not crippling my family.

After being involved in the UConn Marching Band and four other organizations, as well as achieving a 3.96 GPA last semester, I now know UConn is, and was, the best college I could have chosen. The student body here is full of talented individuals ready to leave their footprint on Connecticut and the world, and is the most affordable high quality research school in the area. The low price tag is one of the biggest advantages of attending the university, and one of the highest praises sent its way. Were the tuition to increase as drastically as is proposed, UConn and its infrastructure, as well as the education of Connecticut's future leaders, would be cracked from the inside out. It would not be the same, and I personally would have to scramble to find another college

to attend. The only way to ensure the betterment of Connecticut in the future is to invest in what truly matters today. Education is not a bargaining chip.