

**Appropriations Committee
February 10, 2016**

Testimony of Dr. Jessica Clement

Re: UConn Health Budget

Good evening,

Co-chairs, Ranking Members and members of the Committee, I am Dr. Jessica Clement, an assistant professor and Medical Oncologist at the Carole and Ray Neag Comprehensive Cancer Center at UConn Health. I joined UConn Health 5 years ago from my fellowship at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, Massachusetts; I am a proud resident of West Hartford. It is my sincere pleasure and privilege to represent UConn Health today.

First, I would like to thank you all for your visionary support of UConn Health and Bioscience Connecticut. With your dedication to our state's only academic medical center, I have personally seen and participated in revolutionary changes in our institution. These advances are not only in the bricks and mortar, but in the physician scientists recruited, the caliber of entering medical students, the resources for our Cancer Center patients and the exciting paradigm shifting research.

My roles at UConn Health encompass the institution's mission to "pursue excellence and innovation in the education of health professionals; the discovery, dissemination and utilization of new knowledge; the provision of patient care." I am an educator for fellows in hematology and oncology, medical residents and medical students. I am a medical oncologist specializing in the care of patients with genitourinary cancers including prostate and bladder cancers and gastrointestinal cancers including stomach, colon and pancreatic cancers; I am also a clinician scientist, which means that I treat patients and do research. The breadth of the impact I am able to make in these roles is the reason I chose to join the faculty at UConn Health. I love teaching and am devoted to my patients and their families, yet it is the ability for me to participate in collaborative research to advance the field of cancer therapy that truly motivates me.

Thanks to your investment in UConn Health, we have become a hub of exciting immunotherapy clinical trials and investigator-initiated research. Let me be clear, with our research in immunotherapy we are not just on the cutting edge, we ARE the edge - leading the way in novel cancer treatments that harness the

body's own immune defenses to fight cancer. One such example is the first-in-human personalized vaccine for women with ovarian cancer created in collaboration with physicians and scientists at UConn Health and Storrs. That was created here, in your state institution. Without a doubt, these proposed budget cuts will stifle this research and slow the procession of from bench to bedside, preventing novel therapies from getting to our patients, our neighbors here in Connecticut.

I do not envy you in making these nearly impossible budget decisions. I respectfully request that you reconsider the cuts being discussed that will affect UConn Health. It is not just the institution that will suffer. Without your continued support, please consider each resident in the state of Connecticut who receives care at UConn Health or one of our satellite locations who then cannot because their location closed, every neighbor who currently has a physician or dentist trained at UConn Health, and those who are unable to find one due to provider shortages, and every family with a loved one diagnosed with cancer who is searching for the novel treatments created here, our "moonshot," because standard treatments have failed, and yet not able to access because research and collaboration was halted due to budget constraints. This is the true impact of the proposed budget cuts to UConn Health.

In addition, budget cuts will affect the pace of discoveries in immunotherapy, which are leading to new intellectual property for the University and the State. As you well know, these discoveries form the basis of new biotechnology companies, which create high quality jobs in the State, which in turn enhance tax revenues collected. Ironically, the budget cuts would lead to loss of these revenues, which would defeat the very purpose for which they are being contemplated.

On behalf of my colleagues, students and patients, I respectfully request that you continue your bold and visionary financial investment in the physicians, students and researchers at UConn Health. To slow the momentum we've built - to reverse some of the gains we've achieved and are just now achieving - would be a disappointing waste of investment and a real setback in patient treatment and care.

Thank you. I look forward to any questions that you may have.