

Good Evening,

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee, I am Deborah Redford-Badwal, the director of the Kane Street Pediatric Dental Clinic which is where the clinical training in Pediatric Dentistry takes place. pre-doctoral pediatric dentistry clinical educational curriculum occurs. I work in the School of Dental Medicine and have been faculty for almost 27 years. I am a resident of Southbury, CT.

Thank you for all of your incredible support for UConn Health. Through the state investments in UConn Health, from UCONN 21st Century to Bioscience CT to your regular investments in our Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine, you have made it a great university that is making a real difference to UConn students and our state.

The challenges you face in reducing the state budget deficit are daunting and I don't envy the task before you. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you and urge you to minimize the cuts to UConn Health.

The recommended budget released last week creates a gap of approximately \$131 million between the state funding and what is needed to operate UConn Health next year.

These deep cuts would reverse the progress made at UConn Health and I fear they will negatively impact my ability to educate the dental students and pediatric dental residents as well as treat the dental needs of the children of Connecticut. Although the vast majority of the children seen in our clinics are eligible for Medicaid, which often actually makes our ability to service them, and thus strive to achieve our education mission achievable. Unfortunately, there are dental needs of our patients which are not covered under Medicaid. Such charity care provided at our clinics benefits the patients and fulfills our educational mission in teaching comprehensive dental treatment. Further reduction in fees will cause us to continually negate our ability to meet the goals that are the core of our Mission to our Students, Residents and to the Members of the State whom I serve as a faculty member here at UCONN Health.

One of the reasons that I first enrolled at UConn so many years ago, then accepted a position as faculty and have remained at UConn Health, is to help train those whose skills and abilities will go out and further treat children and their dental needs. But while they are doing this, I want to impart on all of these individuals, a true commitment to know they can impact a child, a child who truly needs their help. My children didn't grow up in the environment that the children I serve grow up in, I want to try and make every future dentist to know that they can change a child's life. It may not be true for every child, but I believe they can change at least one child's life and they must try, and if they try, they will be successful. If I were to go to a more affluent area and not be able to show students the needs of all of our citizens, then how can we expect our future leaders also be caring and conscientious individuals with a moral compass to help those who did not have the same advantages that some of us had. I chose a career that does not pay the salary of a private practice. I choose to drive long distances every day, because I believe in what I do. It took me years to pay back all my student loans that I incurred from my undergraduate and graduate education, but my commitment to serve my community as an educator remained foremost in my life.

Childhood makes up some of the most integral years of our lives, times that impact some of the most fundamental core beliefs about ourselves and about how we look at the world. I want to have our future dentists to learn to show children that there is a way to approach children and work with children. Without funding, we cannot do this. I'm afraid that didactic learning will be what will be taught, and clinical experience will left for on the job training. The UCONN Dental School is the only dental school in the State of Connecticut. We are receiving more referrals from outside providers which is loading our operating room waiting list as many of these children are better treated in the operating room. Cutting funding to us would

mean that we may not be able to even treat these children as whether these are seen as “money making” versus “money losing” would be key, rather than what would be best for the child. This includes things like sedations (intravenous), oral, etc. I currently run the UCONN Pediatric Fluoride Service for the State of Connecticut. This is to aid residents, physicians and dentists in anyone wishing to have their well water tested for the level of fluoride in it. This program does not “make money”, rather it is done strictly for the convenience and assistance of our Connecticut residents and professional communities. This program could also be in jeopardy since we would have to cut so much.

I have been fortunate at UConn Health to have the following experience that will help shape my future or continue my work in pediatric dentistry.

I cannot stress the consequences of these cuts enough. The effect will be **EXTREMELY DIFFICULT** to manage, and will have a severe impact on our programs and our abilities to train our future dentists to be well equipped to see all patients from aged one to when they do not want to see anyone any longer. My commitment has been to teach our dental students to be able to see children from babies on, yet the cuts would greatly jeopardize that practical experience. With the loss of our clinics, our residency would not allow for the training of experts in pediatric dentistry, meaning that we would not have specialists to care for those children needing to see those with severe needs. These are vital to the citizens of Connecticut and to the future of our State.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening and for your ongoing support of UConn Health. I urge you to find a way to restore these cuts so that UConn Health can continue to provide tremendous benefits to our students and patients and to Connecticut’s economy and future.

Sincerely,

Deborah Redford-Badwal, DDS, PhD
Associate Professor, Division of Pediatric Dentistry
Director, Kane Street Pediatric Dental Clinic
School of Dental Medicine
263 Farmington Ave.
Farmington, CT 06030-1610

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