

**Tyler Mack Testimony
Eastern Connecticut State University**

**Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations
Committee Budget Hearing
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities
Wednesday, February 10, 2016**

Thank you Senator Beth Bye and Representative Toni Walker, ranking members and committee members for giving me the chance to address you today.

I'm honored to have been selected to represent Eastern and speak to you, mostly because this opportunity would seem to be very unlikely to some who knew my background. People are often referred to as a product of their environment. Growing up in a single parent household, with two older siblings in Bridgeport, Connecticut hasn't been the ideal situation to go through. Five years ago, my mother was laid-off from a major company where she worked day and night for 22 years. She is currently working a part-time job, just to survive. The pay is not nearly as much as she used to get and she has numerous bills including my college tuition. The financial responsibilities haven't been easy to fulfill, we had to apply for loans and grants and I became a resident assistant to help decrease the amount owed.

Given all of that what motivates me to keep going is the desire to help my mother out and to make her proud. I felt like I can accomplish this at Eastern. As you know, Eastern is Connecticut's public liberal arts university. It doesn't matter what major you

have, at Eastern you are going to learn a lot about a variety of things. I have taken science, art, and economics classes, which have been challenging and rewarding. I realize now that the most important thing you learn in college is how to think critically. How to gather and analyze information and how to solve problems. I aspire to be a great corporate lawyer. That's the confidence that you get when you are at a small campus where you get to have conversations with full time professors-not just adjuncts-and where you can lead class discussions and complete teams projects. I'm currently the Student Government Association's Treasurer, and member of our student organizations Budget and Management Committee. I've participated in Eastern's Master Planning Committee with the administration. These experiences are giving me an opportunity to work as a member of a team, practice my leadership skills, and make a contribution on campus.

Eastern offers great support services. I've been in our Math Achievement and Advising Center plenty of times. Counseling and Psychological Services has helped some of my closest friends and residents get through the most traumatic times in their lives. The Intercultural and Woman's Center as well as our Pride Room helps students appreciate who they are.

If you cut Eastern's budget we will not be the same university that I fell in love with. We have been very fortunate at Eastern to have received the support provided by the General Assembly in the past, and it is my hope that you can continue to support our state universities so that students like me have the opportunity to fulfill their dreams. Thank you again for the time to speak today.