

# UNIFORMED PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT

AFFILIATED WITH INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

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Good afternoon, Honorable Chairmen Rep. Haddad, Sen. Bye and, Sen. Linares, members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, my name is Rick Hart of the Uniformed Professional Firefighters Association of Connecticut which represents 60 Local affiliates of the International Association of Firefighters. Membership in the UPFFA is comprised of approximately 4,000 Union firefighters in Connecticut. I am here to speak in **OPPOSITION** to HB 7326 AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXPANSION OF CONTRACT POLICIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT.

Public safety is a service that has no place in a discussion of privatization or outsourcing of services. Recent events have the CEO of UConn Health Center, Dr. Andrew Agwunobi unilaterally proposing the closure of the UConn Health Center Fire Department (UCHCFD). He has not consulted the Union to negotiate changes in wages, hours, and working conditions, nor has he divulged his plan to protect a community of 8,000 employees and patients on a campus of 300 acres. Jackson Labs, the “crown jewel” of the biomedical industry in Connecticut. The amount of hazardous materials on site poses a specific and unique challenge to any fire department, let alone in a hospital setting. The UCHCFD has on staff 24/7 Hazardous Materials Technicians capable of mitigating any spill, leak, or release of any chemical on site. In a 2013 titled: A study of the Fire Department Services on the University of Connecticut Health Center Campus, the authors stated, “The Fire Companies that service the Town of Farmington, and thus the UHC complex within their defined service areas, are ill prepared to provide primary fire services to the campus” (Mid-America, 2013). Not only is the UCHCFD haz mat tech teams integral to the functions of the Center, they are also intimately familiar with the layout of the campus and all the buildings included on the campus. This is critical to the efficient and timely delivery of emergency services and responses on the campus. The fire department is also responsible for all fire prevention code enforcement and testing. This “proposal” is penny wise and pound foolish and should be rebuffed at all costs for the safety and security of all on the UCHCFD.

Please DO NOT move this bill forward.

Thank you,

*Richard Hart*

Rick Hart

Director, Legislative and Political Affairs

Uniformed Professional Firefighters Association