Appropriations Committee Hearing Testimony
In Support of HB7118
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My research is on synaptic adhesion proteins, which allow the neurons of the brain to communicate with one another. Dysfunction of these proteins causes neuropsychiatric diseases such as autism, schizophrenia, and ADHD. The goal of my research is to identify novel treatments for these diseases, which will alleviate suffering (and lead to patents).

The current fringe rate that I am required to pay for my research associate is devastating to my program of research. The current fringe rate is 66.9% and has risen every year that I have been here. I have spoken with multiple colleagues at other comparable state universities and not one of them pays anything close to that rate.

I am a new professor and starting a research lab is extremely difficult. Every penny is precious. The true cost of my research associate’s fringe rate is much lower that 66.9%. So where does this extra money go? My understanding is that it goes to offset seven decades of the state having underfunded its pension liabilities. From my perspective as the employer, this is like lighting money on fire. This is in addition to the larger base salaries that research associates receive at UConn Health compared to other institutions. I have calculated that for every research associate that I can afford to advance science at UConn Health, my colleagues at other institutions can afford two.

Thus, the fringe rates force me to hire fewer employees and if grant funding runs low, my research associate will be the first to be laid off, because I could not afford to retain her. My research program and my research associate’s career will be the collateral damage of the state’s underfunded pension liability. She has told me that if that happens, then she will take her highly specialized skill set to Boston, where there are plentiful job opportunities. She will be well-prepared professionally, as she was trained by me personally.