Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Juan Carlos Restrepo and I am a phlebotomist at UConn Health. I have been a phlebotomist for 17 years. For 10 years I worked in a clinical laboratory and have worked at UConn for the past 7 years.

I am here today to ask you to fully fund the UConn Health Center because it is so important to invest in our public hospital. Every day my fellow union members and I register and greet everyone that comes into the lab for services. We draw blood from patients of all ages. We help train our staff in phlebotomy and other orientations. Some of us are assigned to work on the floors: when we are, we go to different rooms and draw blood in our bedside units. I also work in central processing, where I have a variety of duties working with the specimens. I prepare the specimens that I receive from the tube stations for our Med Techs to test. I answer phones and collaborate with doctors regarding specimen results, help answer questions from the nursing units, and perform a daily checklist and follow closing procedures at the end of the day.

Many of our phlebotomists and laboratory assistants have different specialties. At UConn, I’m trained and specialize in pediatric blood draws. I have been asked by the doctors to assist with extremely difficult pediatric draws. Some of the families we serve come from a different hospital or even out of state because they have had bad experiences with other laboratories. They arrive frustrated and worried. But when they come to us, they are relieved. Our duty is to diffuse any difficult situations, put the patients at ease, and deliver our service that the public and our communities deserve. There is no worse feeling to know that your child may not be treated for what they need just because they have difficulty with getting blood drawn. This is just one important reason why we take pride in the work we do and why we must protect our public hospital. Where else would they go? What are their alternatives? Bad experiences often discourage families and patients and they may stop looking for health care altogether.

My co-workers and I take pride in providing these services to our community. My family takes pride in the work I do because they know I help to make a difference in standing for what I believe in. I work hard for my patients and work hard to
build the trust that is established at our public hospital. This is a trust that is worth defending. That is why we should fully fund our public hospital for the public good.