Hello. My name is Jeremy Figueroa-Ortiz. I am a two-time Husky, attending UConn for both my undergraduate degree and now dental school, where I am finishing my third year. First, I would like to thank you for taking the time to hold this hearing and offering us the opportunity for our voices to be heard. I want to briefly share my experience with you so that you can understand how important UConn and UConn Health are to me personally, but also to show that supporting UConn and UConn Health is critical to provide opportunities to Connecticut students who want to stay in our state and to ensure the future health of our people and our economy.

As a New Britain native, I hold immense pride in my state. Starting my journey as one of four children to teenaged parents in a three-bedroom apartment with 13 other family members, I stand in front of you humbled and blessed, for the opportunity to speak but also for the opportunity to be amongst my peers in this dignified institution.

When I was in high school, a conference administrator for a UConn sponsored event picked me up from my house to ensure my attendance. Additionally, they made the effort to keep in touch with me throughout high school, exposing me to different facets of academia such as research. Fast forward to college, something that I never imagined being possible as I knew almost no one who had attended. Here, I found myself doing more research, meeting lifelong mentors, achieving academic successes such as honors, being a New England Scholar for consecutive years, and eventually graduating Magna Cum Laude, all with UConn support.

Now, as a dental student, UConn continues to support my growth: recently funding my research at the National Institutes of Health to work on bone regeneration, affording me the opportunity to attend a national Hispanic Dental Association conference so I could further expand my network, and encouraging my participation in externships as I strive toward my goal of becoming an Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon.

These are the reasons I am here and why I yearn to remain in Connecticut as a practicing surgeon for our communities. Finding one location with innumerable selfless, driven, dedicated, passionate professionals seems nearly unlikely - but we have it here in our state. I cannot place enough emphasis on your role in this.

This would be impossible without your investment in our institution and in our education as the future healthcare professionals in Connecticut. Without you, the 600 of our combined Medical and Dental students at UConn Health could not be here. Without you, we would probably not have almost 90% of in-state students in the Dental School. We probably
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would not be amongst the highest ranked dental schools nationally. The return on investment on your end is immeasurable.

Thank you for all you have done in the past to support higher education. Please continue to provide UConn Health with the funding it needs so that Connecticut can remain a state with exceptional healthcare, research and education, and with a strong healthcare workforce.

Thank you for your time and attention.