Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee,

I’d like to tell you about my experience as a student at the UConn for the last two years, and why I write now in support of UConn’s state budget.

I’m currently a sophomore Honors and STEM Scholar undergraduate in the Computer Science and Mathematics programs. Since early my freshman year, I’ve been conducting research with the Eversource Energy Center at the Innovation Partnership Building (IPB) at UConn. My research group, a team of graduate students and faculty, works full-time to develop new scientific methods by which to improve the reliability of the state's power grid in conjunction with Connecticut’s largest energy provider.

Under the support of the Eversource Energy Center and UConn’s Holster summer research grant, I was able to personally develop a machine learning model that could help Eversource and other utility companies respond to the outages caused by severe storms. I’m now working to operationalize a model that Eversource will use for staging repair crews ahead of thunderstorms.

Because UConn invests in its vibrant research culture, its partnership with local industry, and the education of its students under faculty who are themselves active researchers, I and many of my friends have been able to meaningfully contribute to the economic development of the state in a way that wouldn’t be otherwise possible: by coming up with new ideas and new ways of thinking that won’t be found in a traditional business environment.

I see every day the creative thinking and the relentless spirit of science working on behalf of the state of Connecticut here at UConn. I’m incredibly proud to be a Husky because I get to be a part of that work.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee. I hope the state will continue to recognize UConn’s instrumental role as a research and education institution at the heart of Connecticut's culture and economy.

Sincerely,

Berk Alpay