Chairwomen Osten and Walker, Ranking Members Formica and Lavielle, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you tonight and speak on behalf of the UConn Community. My name is Frederick Augur and I am a native of North Branford, Connecticut. I am a third-year political science undergraduate in UConn’s Honors program and a Fast-Track Master’s student at UConn’s Department of Public policy. I speak today in opposition of any considered cuts to the University’s state funding, and I concur in full with my classmates who have spoken before me.

From personal experience, I can say without reservation that the University of Connecticut offers residents unparalleled value in higher education. In my first semester at UConn, in the heat of the 2016 election, I had the unique opportunity to take class with, and later conduct original research under, Professor Paul Herrnson, one of the nation’s top scholars on American Elections. Less than a year removed from High School, Dr. Herrnson’s expertise, combined with support from the university’s enrichment programs, enabled me to call, interview, and, in one case, personally meet with nationally-syndicated journalists, campaign directors, and political fundraisers.

Throughout my time at UConn thus far, I have had opportunities to take a class taught by a special advisor to President Bill Clinton, to hold paid research positions, and to earn credits towards a Masters’ degree starting my third year of college. In the next two months alone, I will be presenting original research with my advisor at two national conferences and participate in the Department of Public Policy’s Internship and Professional Practice Program, whereby I will earn credit towards a Master in Public Policy through an internship with a Connecticut government agency or nonprofit organization. These experiences are less a reflection of my personal accomplishments, and more a testament to the incredible opportunities offered by our state’s flagship academic institution. UConn has become a widely-respected public university, and has attracted top talent in both students and faculty as a result.

An equally impressive testament to the value of UConn is that I have been able to accomplish all of the above without incurring any student debt. In a country with skyrocketing college costs, UConn has been able to offer students a first-rate experience at a bargain price. UConn’s ability to offer such value is in large part due to the financial support that the State and the general assembly has provided the University over the past several years. Your continued support will sustain this opportunity for future generations.

There are few institutions in the nation that could provide me with the opportunities that UConn has, and those that can, do so with a price tag three to four times that of UConn. UConn offers unparalleled value to its students, and the value it has offered to me is among the reason my parents remain Connecticut Residents. UConn is among the most valuable institutions for the future of this state, and cutting its funding would be counterproductive and imprudent. Thank you again for your time.