Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representatives DiMassa and Horn, and members of the Appropriations Committee;

My name is Kathleen Cruz, and I am freshman marketing major at the University of Connecticut. I am writing to testify on the Budget Hearing for Higher Education.

Support for UConn is instrumental in the education of a highly skilled workforce for the state. The resources UCONN has provided—whether in academics or organizations—has equipped me to succeed in future professional endeavors because of my direct exposure to environments that work professionally. For one, my involvement in tier 3 organizations such as SUBOG (Student Union Board of Governors: responsible for events around campus), UCTV (creates videos on campus), and CONNPIRG (Connecticut Public Interest Research Group) are all structured and operated in a business-like manner. Having the opportunity to work with UCONN’s primary organizations has underscored effective ways to interact with other people and bring advocacies, events, or projects into fruition. Moreover, the curriculum at UCONN has illuminated perspectives that I wouldn’t have considered otherwise—thus, this enhances my skillset and puts me one step ahead of other potential job candidates. The backbone of both of these institutions fundamentally relies on funding. Without funding, these organizations and these classes would not be able to instigate change as successfully.

On a more personal note, these aforementioned establishments have made my educational experience fulfilling. As an immigrant, I believed my education in the Philippines didn’t adeptly prepare me for the “real world.” I felt naive as I’ve only experienced a glimpse of what both true suffering and true success looked like. Thus, I sought after a more holistic, immersive learning experience that would ground my mindset to the different realities that people with intersectional identities had to deal with. If I had a better understanding of what other individuals truly had to struggle with, I could make concrete efforts to solve these inequities. My ultimate goal was to use this education to improve myself, and consequently, improve the very avenues I would work for in the future. When I moved to America, and eventually, when I started studying at UCONN, I found the very education I was looking for. Social science classes such as Anthropology, Women Gender and Sexuality Studies, Comparative Politics, and even Economics revealed both the problems I was previously ignorant to (i.e. marginalization and oppression based on class and color) and the root of these problems. Because of this newfound outlook, I had a more comprehensive definition of what adversity looked like. My educational experience doesn’t stop there: by joining CONNPIRG, I realized that I could be a part of the solution to these problems by amplifying student voices. Moreover, organizations such as UCTV and SUBOG exhibited the power of media and entertainment to highlight or remedy these injustices. All of these opportunities have made me enjoy my college experience, and more importantly, have proved that all of the sacrifices and risks that my family and I undertook to get an American education
were worth it. Coming from my simple, middle class background, I would've never imagined that I would get the opportunity to have such a gratifying educational experience, and I genuinely believe that I could never get this type of learning anywhere else.

UConn is a vital asset to the State of Connecticut and maintaining state support for UConn is critical to my continued access to quality education. In the past, the state budget has provided generous support to UConn’s important mission of providing education, service, and research to the state and residents of Connecticut, and I strongly encourage you to continue this generosity in the next budget.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Cruz
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