Hello. My name is Garrett D’Amato, and I am from Middlefield, CT. I am currently a Senior at UConn, and I am simultaneously a first year law student at the UConn School of Law. I’d like to thank the Committee, the State, and the University for this chance to speak today.

I was a tour guide at UConn for roughly two years. In that capacity, I had the opportunity to show thousands of prospective students what made this place so special. I’d end every tour the same way; I would tell my “why I chose UConn” story. Ironically, it always started the same way, with me telling that I honestly did not want to go to UConn. Both my parents had gone (they are both PA’s who work in the state now), and combined with trying to make my own path and the fact that I thought it was too big for me, I recoiled at the thought of going. Two things changed my mind and allowed me to make the best decision I have ever made.

First, the tuition aspect. The state’s funding allows UConn to operate one of the best public universities in the country with a tuition that is competitive against all of them. UConn was simply the best school for the best price, and I didn’t have to bargain away quality for money. I won’t go too in depth into this subject, but it should be noted that UConn provides students with a foundation to start off with a stellar education without a mountain of debt, allowing students to become contributing members of society right away opposed to using state funds to help us get off of our feet.

Second, I learned that you can always make a large school small, but you can never make a small school large. In the context of this meeting, I mean that small schools simply don’t get the funding that large schools get, and UConn’s use of those funds is what attracts students like myself. The student life on campus is better than any campus I have ever seen or heard of, and the hundreds of clubs and organizations that a student can join allow students to explore interests, talents, and opportunities that we wouldn’t otherwise get to. These clubs allow students to make and foster connections with peers and mentors, often leading to jobs and further connections right out of UConn, most of the time within the state.

As students and residents of the state, we often here about how our legislature is trying to fix the economy. I firmly believe that the best way to start is by investing in our higher education in the state. When students come to the university, they are more likely to stay in the state when they are done. I for one hope to become the youngest contributing member of the Connecticut Bar Association in two years time, and I know that I couldn’t have done that without the generosity of the University, generosity that is enabled by this committee. I thank both the University and the Committee for giving me the tools and opportunities it has, and I hope that this generosity will continue into the future with further generations of students. Thank you.

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