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

My name is Michael DaCosta, and I am an undergraduate student at the University of Connecticut. I am currently studying Finance within the School of Business and also an aspiring Entrepreneur involved in UConn's excellent programs such as Get Seeded, Accelerate UConn, and Summer Fellowship. I am writing to testify on the Budget Hearing for Higher Education.

I enrolled at the University of Connecticut because I found that it had many opportunities outside of the classroom for me to excel and chase my dreams of one day operating my own company. These amazing programs have allowed me to connect with the right people to make this dream a reality. I have been at the University for less than a year now and have already been awarded $3,400 in funding from UConn's program to get my business off the ground. With this money we were able to start the prototyping for the beta version of our application and take a customer discovery trip to attend the Cue EdTech Conference in Palm Springs California. This is an amazing experience that I would never have without the programs UConn has to offer.

It frightens me that I am only a freshman and there is a possibility that by the time I graduate there will not be enough funding for more of these type of activities because of the budget cuts. I strongly assert that this will draw people like me, aspiring entrepreneurs, away from the University and towards other schools with better entrepreneurship programs. The reward that UConn can get from these students is limitless. These budget cuts will start to turn the Mark Zuckerberg's of the world away from our school, losing a lifetime of investments. I believe that we need to invest in our students now, so twenty years down the road they come back and invest in us.

Me and thousands of other students at this University care so much about our higher education that we want to be a part of something that will stand by us and give us every opportunity to excel. If we don’t have this support from our own school, students won’t want to represent UConn when they are thriving within the real world. I personally see these budget cuts as more of a loss for the University rather than the students itself. We as young adults have the power and motivation to achieve the goals, we set early on in life and we aren’t going to let UConn hold us back.

The University needs to take a step back and look at the potential it holds in its hand. Then it needs to ask itself, do we want to be a part of this growth and get brought to the top through our students? Or do we want to hold back and let them get to the top without us? The decision seems like a no brainer to me and many other students at the University. We would love to have UConn branded on us forever, but not if we don’t have the support during our time spent here.

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,

Michael DaCosta

South Windsor, CT

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