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

My name is Anna Puchkoff and I am both a graduate student and Research Assistant at the University of Connecticut and a member of the Graduate Employee Union (GEU-UAW Local 6950). I am honored and humbled to be working for UConn, as I am studying how to restore Connecticut’s coastal wetlands for carbon storage and cycling. As a student as well as a researcher, I am one of the many people who not only personally benefit from the higher education funding for my advanced degree, but also as a provider of additional information to help support and inform the state’s natural resource management goals. I am writing to testify on the Budget Hearing for Higher Education.

In my research studying Connecticut coastal wetlands, I am directly impacting and helping the state’s body of knowledge towards restoration practices for maintaining coastal resilience. Coastal wetlands are valued ecological and economic assets to the state as proven by the widely used beaches and marinas across the coast. It is necessary that the state university maintain and even improve the funds to support and expand higher education and research efforts to understand and refine solutions. As a graduate student, my UConn advanced degree and studies will allow me to take these skills to applied restoration projects for the state of Connecticut. I am currently working closely with the state wetland restoration manager to identify on the ground issues for experimentation and application.

Support for UConn allows us to maintain a reputation as a competitive and strong university, ensuring that we can recruit and retain dedicated and skilled faculty and staff. I chose coming to UConn because of their academic reputation and the faculty in my specialized department. My advisor is a superior researcher in her field and she has accomplished exceptional work as well as produced very successful graduate students. In order to keep exceptional faculty, as well as support their labs and research running, they need the state’s support in order to stay competitive in their field of research but to also recruit the highest caliber graduate students.

UConn is a vital asset to the State of Connecticut. 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,

Anna Puchkoff
Graduate Research Assistant, Applied Plant Ecology Lab
The Department of Natural Resources and the Environment
The College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Sciences
Coventry, Connecticut
anna.puchkoff@uconn.edu