Dear members of the Connecticut State Appropriations Committee,

My name is Patrick Hocking, an honors sophomore at the University of Connecticut-Storrs, studying Biomedical Engineering, and a member of the primary undergraduate innovation group, the Werth Innovators, led by the Werth Institute – which brings together student and faculty programs fostering entrepreneurship and innovation that potentially have commercial application and can be used to create new companies.

As a resident of the state, and a student at its flagship university, I am asking the committee today requesting that funding for UConn’s state budget be maintained at the level recommended by the Governor or increased beyond that level so that the University can continue to expand effective programs in entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship education is something I’ve found great passion for, both as a beneficiary and a benefactor. My introduction to this field began just over a year ago, where I had the opportunity to participate in the Connecticut Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation’s technology commercialization initiative: Accelerate UConn, where I was able to work with a laboratory from the School of Nursing developing an analytical breastfeeding device. Since then, I have had the chance to participate in a wide range of educational sessions, classes, programs, and cooperatives; ranging topics from patent law to consumer marketing.

At the beginning of my UConn career, I never would have imagined being where I am today. I loved medicine, and I loved helping people, so naturally, I pursued biology and the pre-med tract. It was through the entrepreneurship programs at UConn that I learned that it is far more than the doctors who are helping people and promoting medicine. Through these programs, I’ve fallen in love with problem solving and supporting others, which has led me to founding my current venture. In our process, we are providing opportunities for college students to gain experience in their fields through targeted pairings with local Connecticut small business’. It was only by the utilization of the techniques taught by UConn’s entrepreneurship programs that we were able to properly execute, incorporating strategies such as hypothesis testing, product-market fit, and the customer-value chain.

If it weren’t for the funding of these critical programs, I feel that I, along with the many fellow young entrepreneurs I’ve had the pleasure to meet, would be lost. Entrepreneurship without guidance seems as it would be absolutely terrifying, if it hadn’t been for the mentors and teachers I’ve had the opportunity to learn from. It’s programs like these that have empowered and inspired me to pursue the challenges of entrepreneurship in the state of Connecticut after graduation. Watching myself and my colleagues grow over this time has brought a passion that pushes me to request that Connecticut continue to support the growth of entrepreneurial education at UConn.
Finally, I implore the committee to keep in mind what it means to invest in UConn. Building strong, well rounded students today, ready to take on the plethora of challenges faced daily by small business owners, is essential to the State and its communities. Providing the correct tools to future entrepreneurs allow for their future companies to flourish, providing jobs, income, and attraction to the state of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to allow me to speak on this topic, and please feel free to contact me to open a dialogue about the content of this testimony.

Patrick J. Hocking