



THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, INC.

**Public Testimony**

**HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE**

**AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Mary Ellen Junda  
President, UConn-AAUP**

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Senator Haskell, Representative Elliott, and esteemed members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of this Act.

My name is Mary Ellen Junda. I am a Professor of Music at the University of Connecticut and currently serve as President of the UConn Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (UConn-AAUP), representing 1800 faculty members and coaches in collective bargaining.

The UConn faculty and staff have been remarkable during this challenging time. Over 750 faculty members have taken course to improve on-line teaching and research; our research has contributed to the knowledge about the COVID-19 virus and increased our protection during this pandemic. We have developed a testing system for detecting the virus in waste matter, a system that helped to keep students safely on campus throughout the fall semester that is being adopted at other universities and businesses throughout the country.

We collaborated with UConn Health to get increased supplies of PPE for our front-line workers; developed the Data Visualization Website that charts the course of the pandemic in CT and throughout the country; are developing a low-cost portable Covid-19 Test instrument that can have test results in minutes; and are researching COVID-19 Preventive Health Behavior analyzing why some comply with restrictions and others don't, which could have major implications for the success of the vaccine.

This is just a short list, but our faculty has contributed much more. We will continue to do so as key players in the Workforce Strategic Plan by contributing critical research in workforce and industry development, health care advances and being a leader in innovation and change in STEM and, I personally hope, related areas such as the arts and humanities.

UConn-AAUP supports a study of the impact of COVID-19 on higher education, not to shine light on deficiencies that have been caused by the virus, but to shine light on the way faculty in all of Connecticut's institutions of higher education met the challenges head-on to serve the needs of our students and our state. This study can provide further evidence of the critical role faculty played in creating real solutions for Connecticut communities during this pandemic and the need for continued funding to support their efforts in the future.