

**American Association of University Professors**  
**University of Connecticut Health Center Chapter**

Written Testimony for the Appropriation Committee  
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Ion I. Moraru, MD, PhD  
Professor of Cell Biology  
Director, High Performance Computing Facility  
Institute for Systems Genomics Center for Cell Analysis and Modeling  
UCONN Health 400 Farmington Ave. Farmington, CT 06030-6406  
Vice-President, UCHC-AAUP

Dear Committee members:

I am a Professor at UConn Health and a Principal Investigator and Co-Director of the Center for Reproducible Biomedical Modeling. This is a National Biotechnology Resource Center funded by a six-year grant from the National Institutes of Health. It is a multidisciplinary and multi-institutional center: a collaborative effort between the University of Washington, Seattle, the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, UConn Health, Farmington, and the Auckland Bioengineering Institute, New Zealand.

One of the salaried positions funded by this grant is for a computer scientist to work on one of the joint projects between UConn Health and Mount Sinai. This position was originally supposed to be hired through UConn Health, but due to the high fringe benefit rates imposed on research (resulting from the unfunded state pension plan liability), we could not meet the dollar cap on the grant award and the position was moved from the UConn Health budget to the Mount Sinai budget.

The direct result was that UConn Health and the State of Connecticut lost approximately \$1.4 million in federal funds, as well as a newly created six-year, full-time, highly skilled STEM job, to Mount Sinai and the State of NY. Were the State of Connecticut to have funded fringe costs appropriately, in this particular case it would have increased state expenditures only by about \$165,000 (total over the five-year period). This is one concrete example of how the high fringe benefit rates put UConn Health and the State of Connecticut in a losing position, and of the high return of investment that would result from reducing fringe rates to appropriate levels.

This problem is compounded by the cumulative negative effect of no salary raises to professional staff in multiple years (including in this fiscal year in which we currently operate under a contract extension, in the absence of a renewal). I have open positions funded by federal research grants that I have been unable to fill due to non-competitive salaries - over several months, all qualified interviewed candidates who received an offer so far have declined for this reason.

I ask that Appropriation Committee members to support the following:

- 100% coverage of the state legacy costs: retiree unfunded pension and retiree health (the SB 8 bill in Higher Education just covers the pension piece).

- Block grant increases in FY22 & FY23 to fund the collective bargaining increases negotiated by SEBAC: we are requesting an additional \$25M be added to the UConn Health block grant to cover the entire amount (salary and fringe).
- Parity adjustment, thereby treating UConn Health the same as other state divisions, with the state covering the 27th payroll in FY23 (in FY23 there are 27 pay periods, but the approved budget only includes 26 pay periods for higher ed units).

Thank you for your time,  
Ion Moraru