

Peech

- Chairpersons Krueger and Pretlow, members of the legislature and staff, my name is Kait Murtha. I am a postdoctoral researcher at Weill Cornell Medicine, Cornell University's medical school, and an elected representative of my union, UAW Local 4100.
- I'm here today as part of FundNYScience, network of researchers across our state, in coalition with unions, medical schools and patients - advocating for expanded public investment in life-saving research.
- Specifically, we ask that you allocate an additional \$100 million to the Governor's Bolstering Biotech Initiative and ensure that this money is used primarily to support early-career researchers through a system of competitive grants and training fellowships.
- Like many of my colleagues, I began my postdoctoral research immediately following my PhD program. I work alongside around 500 other postdocs in over 280 labs. We are highly skilled researchers who perform experiments, analyze data, disseminate research findings, and train and mentor graduate students.
- I belong to the Cardiovascular research institute at WCM
 - Cardiovascular Disease is the #1 leading cause of death in America - causing one in every three deaths
 - In the lab I study tissue repair using zebrafish as a model organism due to their unique ability to regenerate heart tissue, which is extremely limited in humans.
 - We aim to learn from the mechanisms of zebrafish in hopes of unlocking the regenerative potential of human cardiac tissue.
 - Before this, I was at Mount Sinai studying Alzheimer's disease.
 - I was drawn to this work because my mom was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's while I was halfway across the country in grad school
 - I came back to New York both to be closer to my family and because New York is home to the best research institutes in the world
- As postdocs, we often dedicate long hours, relocate long distances, and undergo years of training to become the top scientists in our fields. We move to New York because of the funding, the resources that exist here and the opportunity to collaborate with other talented researchers.
- Not long after I returned to New York, the Trump administration began attempting to cancel research grants and enact massive funding cuts.
- As part of the UAW over the past year, we've fought back against these cuts alongside tens of thousands of unionized researchers across the country.
- Despite these efforts,
 - Many projects have stalled, institutions like WCM have implemented hiring freezes, workforce reductions, and limitations on spending, and there is feeling of uncertainty about our careers and our work
- In face of these challenges, researchers are leaving academia or relocating.
- Texas and other states like Massachusetts and California, which are considering major new investments in research, are great examples of how supporting science helps maintain a state's competitiveness.
- Being a scientist has allowed me to make sense of the world around me. I've always believed that by dedicating my life to understanding complex human diseases, I would have an opportunity to contribute something meaningful to society. I'm proud to work alongside some of the brightest and most talented early career researchers in the world, and I believe it's critical that we do everything possible to avoid the loss of this talent from New York by expanding science funding at the state-level.