My name is Kait Murtha. Less than 1 year ago I started as a postdoc in the Cell & Developmental Biology Department at Weill Cornell Medicine.

In the lab I study mechanisms of tissue repair following injury using zebrafish as a model due to their unique ability to regenerate heart tissue, which is extremely limited in mammals, including humans.

We aim to learn from zebrafish what mechanisms make them capable of full cardiac regeneration in hopes of unlocking the regenerative potential of human cardiac tissue.

This is actually my second postdoc - which is common for academic biomedical researchers.

I was previously at Mount Sinai studying how different gene variants influence the behavior of certain cell types in the brains of Alzheimer's disease patients.

I was drawn to this work because my mom was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease while I was half way across the country in grad school.

Being a scientist has allowed me to make sense of the world around me. I've always believed that by dedicating my life to trying to understand complex human diseases, I would have a real opportunity to contribute something meaningful to society.

For similar reasons, I've been drawn to trying to make the workplace of academic researchers better and have been involved in our union for postdoctoral researchers, both at Mount Sinai and Weill Cornell. Academia is full of unbalanced power structures that take advantage of early career researchers - particularly those of us who are not from the U.S. originally.

Unstable funding has only made this more apparent and has manifested in decreased job security, discouraging career outlooks, and scarcity of resources.

As elected leaders in our union, we're committed to ensuring that our members, who are some of the brightest and most talented scientists in the world, are able to stay in New York and do what they do best.

I came to New York because it is home to the best research institutes in the world, something that is true for most of my colleagues.

I came here after doing my PhD in Texas, which has been a leader in state-based research funding over the last 20 years.

Texas, and other states like Mass and California are great examples of how state investment in basic biomedical research is invaluable for workforce development, health and wellness of its constituents, and maintaining the state's competitive status performing top tier research

Expanding funding for workforce development, training, and a system of scientific grants similar to what we as researchers are familiar with at the federal level would ensure that scientific workers like us can focus on our life-saving research without the insecurity that loss of federal funding has caused for the tens of thousands of us who rely on this funding to our important work.

Thank you.