



University of Connecticut Health Center
School of Dental Medicine

Office of the Dean

TESTIMONY

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

March 5, 2009

Distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. My name is Monty MacNeil, Dean, School of Dental Medicine, University of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding **H. B. No. 6335 AN ACT CONCERNING THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT HEALTH CENTER FACILITIES PLAN.**

First, please let me express my gratitude to this committee and our state Legislature for such strong support of your state Dental School and the University of Connecticut Health Center since their inception in 1968.

I wish to share my viewpoints and those of our faculty on why the relationship of the Dental School with an academic health center, i.e. the UHC, and an integrated hospital, i.e. John Dempsey Hospital, is so important to the quality and delivery of our education, research, patient care and service programs.

Our School is fortunate to be an integral component of the University of Connecticut Health Center. Less than one-third of US dental schools are members of academic health centers therein benefitting from the unique opportunities and synergies that the health center environment provides. Our reputation as a leading US dental school is undoubtedly due in part to this relationship and the tangible outcomes derived from close partnership with a School of Medicine and a campus-based university hospital.

Our educational goal is to train practitioners to integrate biomedical science and dental practice to best serve the oral healthcare needs of the public. We do this initially by sharing an exceptional basic medical science (BMS) curriculum with the School of Medicine. The BMS curriculum is only as rich as the quality of the faculty who participate in it and our academic health center provides an environment that is attractive for the recruitment and retention of outstanding educators, researchers, and clinicians. Amongst the faculty whom our students experience are physicians who are actively involved on day-to-day contemporary patient care and clinical research within John Dempsey Hospital. Later in their training, our students benefit tremendously from interactions throughout the Health Center and hospital. Our dental students have rotational experiences in the John Dempsey Hospital and their clinical training is enhanced by managing complex, medically challenging patients who present for care upon referral from practitioners and clinics throughout the Health Center. The majority of these patients would otherwise not receive dental care in the private sector as a result of their complex health care needs. Students learn best in an environment of cross-professional interaction and can carry these skills forward into their practices.

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The School offers postgraduate training programs for individuals seeking additional training beyond the four year DMD program. One such program is the general dentistry residency program. The School's general dentistry program is the primary provider of dental care for adult patients with acquired or developmental disabilities. In partnership with the Department of Developmental Services, currently over 750 adults with developmental disabilities are actively undergoing dental treatment with us. This segment of the population, which is one of the most underserved and medically and dentally fragile, requires a level of care and service which cannot be provided in the average dental school; these patients require hospital outpatient and inpatient surgical care. We would be unable to provide such care without John Dempsey Hospital and would be unable to properly train the next generation of providers without immediate access to a hospital which provides us with full operating room and post-operative support needs. Further, via our partnership with the John Dempsey Hospital Emergency Department, we are currently the largest provider of emergency dental care in the State. Our ability to fulfill this service to the neediest citizens of CT would be compromised without an on-campus hospital Emergency Department facility.

Our faculty researchers benefit greatly from close interactions with John Dempsey Hospital physicians, personnel and programs. Our growing clinical and translational research portfolio depends on these relationships and the services that an on-campus hospital can provide. Loss of this capacity would be a setback to the School's efforts to expand its patient-based research efforts and maintain its leadership position in research amongst dental schools.

For these and other reasons, it would be detrimental to the core missions of the School of Dental Medicine should John Dempsey Hospital cease to function or not be replaced on campus by another facility. We continue to be dedicated to educating dental providers who will be leaders in improving overall healthcare for the citizens of Connecticut and recommend that the legislature continue to be supportive of all components of our academic health center.