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**Testimony
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
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HB 6335 AN ACT CONCERNING THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
HEALTH CENTER FACILITIES PLAN**

Senator Handley, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, I would like to thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify in support of **HB 6335 AN ACT CONCERNING THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT HEALTH CENTER FACILITIES PLAN**

My name is Bruce Gould. I'm an internist and primary care physician and serve as the medical director at the St. Francis/University of Connecticut Primary Care Center at the Burgdorf Health Center in the north end of Hartford. This community health facility serves the needs of some of the most vulnerable and underserved populations in the state. I am also the Associate Dean for Primary Care, the Director of the Connecticut Area Health Education Center Program at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine and medical director of the Hartford Department of Health and Human Services.

I am a hybrid... I spend half my time at the Burgdorf Health Center caring for the poor and underserved. The other half is spent at the University, teaching, running programs, developing curricula on delivering safe, high quality health care to the same underserved populations and to all of you. Half my salary comes from UConn and half from Saint Francis Hospital. I also spend time, part of the third half of my job, at the Hartford Health Department helping to safeguard the public health. Welcome to my reality...but that reality gives me a somewhat unique view of our regional health care system, its populations and the role of the integrated academic health center in assuring and improving the health status of all of us.

Medicine is an art and a science but, as our local economy and our national experience with past proposals for health care reform will attest, it most certainly has become "big business". As the baby boomers, including myself, age and get sicker, there will be the need for additional capacity in our health care system. If and when we move to universal access to health care, the need for additional primary care providers will skyrocket overnight. Where will they come from? For Connecticut, many will find their training at the UConn Health Center. But only if we can maintain its strength and vitality, its innovation and expertise.

I take care of the poor...that is my calling...but I could not do this without the support of the University of Connecticut. The Burgdorf is a joint endeavor of St. Francis Hospital and UConn. The University pumps over one and a half million dollars in faculty salaries and direct dollar subsidies into the clinic each year. Without that support and the doctors to deliver the care, our 35 thousand visits per year would not happen. The University similarly supports Asylum Hill Family Practice and its 17 thousand annual visits, also a partnership with St. Francis.

Our Area Health Education Center Program or AHEC is part of a federal program started in the 1970s to address access to and quality of healthcare provided to underserved populations. We leverage federal dollars using the stalwart support of the University as collateral to address health care workforce issues across the state through our four regional centers (Hartford, Waterbury, Fairfield and Jewett City). We are in elementary and secondary schools providing math and science enrichment and trying to fan the embers of interest in health careers. Through our nationally acclaimed Youth Health Service Corps, we are in high schools teaching students real health care delivery skills and training them to be volunteers in community settings; homeless shelters, community health centers, food banks. Through our nascent Collegiate Health Service Corps we are training college students at our community colleges and universities to understand population health and health care delivery to facilitate their interest in health careers and in serving the underserved, and helping them to make their career goals a reality. Through our Urban Service Track at the UConn Schools of Medicine, Dental Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy, we are recruiting students committed to meeting the health care needs of the most underserved of Connecticut and training them to be the providers that will make a difference and change the character of our health care system so it will begin to meet the needs of all Americans.

Our student-run homeless shelter clinics at the South Park Inn and the Salvation Army Marshall Street Shelters and at the Willimantic Soup Kitchen provide essential access to care for hundreds of our most needy and forgotten citizens. Our Mobile free migrant farm worker clinic visits farms across the state each summer providing care to those who grow our food and keep our agricultural economy moving.

All of these programs, directly affecting the lives of thousands of the underserved, the children, the students and indirectly affecting who knows how many more, do not run on air. They do run on a shoestring and leverage the energy, caring and commitment of students, faculty and community clinicians. But all of them are dependent on resources and the ongoing unflinching support from the University. These are difficult times. A healthy UConn Health Center is vital to everything we do...without it, none of these programs would survive.

You've been told or read in the numerous editorials and opinion pieces in the state's papers that UConn should not need its own hospital...Yale and Harvard don't have their own. But each of them have hospitals across the street and not a 15-20 minute drive away (depending on traffic). The future of our medical and dental schools and their ability to recruit and retain their outstanding faculty are dependent on assuring the presence of all the tools of education, research, and yes, clinical care, within reach of that faculty.

I honestly believe that the University of Connecticut's Schools of Medicine and Dentistry cannot survive without a viable, appropriately sized and updated hospital. Without the ongoing support of the University I can't do my job. As a community provider to the underserved and as an educator to the next generation of those who will hopefully commit their lives to serving those most in need, I implore you to provide support **the UConn Health Center and HB 6335** adequate resources to the University so that I can continue to do my job and assure that when each of you needs care, there will be someone to provide it for you. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,
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