

Testimony  
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
Public Hearing, March 5, 2009

**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, my name is Robert Bona. I am a resident of Windsor, Connecticut where I have lived with my family since 1983. I am a hematologist practicing at the University of Connecticut Health Center where I have been for the past 12 years. My role at the health center and school of medicine is diverse and gratifying. I practice hematology, direct our fellowship training program in hematology-oncology, administer a third year clinical course for medical students and oversee a seven week portion of the second year curriculum for medical and dental students. I also work with some of our basic scientists on translational research projects and enjoy the vibrant academic environment where I work. I am able to participate in all these roles because I am supported by faculty of like mind who are located under a single roof.

You have heard many of the arguments in support for and against the proposed replacement hospital and partnership with Hartford Hospital. I would like to speak **in favor of the HB 6335** supporting a replacement hospital and a partnership with Hartford Hospital and provide my perspective.

As practitioners, our activities are diverse with particular emphasis on the care of patients with hemophilia and other bleeding disorders, sickle cell diseases and blood cancers such as leukemia, lymphoma and multiple myeloma. In addition to clinical revenues some of our work is supported from extra mural grant funding and through philanthropy from the LEA's Foundation for Leukemia Research. The support of this local foundation has allowed us to establish a center for blood disorders, a relatively unique program in the area, funneling locally generated financial support into enhanced patient care through research.

Paramount for us is our mission to share knowledge with our student colleagues. Teaching of medical and dental students through their basic science curriculum is best accomplished by scientists, physician scientists and clinician scientists who are conversant with the latest biomedical advances. The best of these individuals populate programs where research, patient care and teaching occur at high levels and where the hospital and medical school are physically linked.

Student mentoring and advising is an important function of faculty at any medical school. I personally serve as an advisor for 3-6 third year students each year. This connection between student and teacher is critical for their career development and sets the stage for future mentor-mentee relationships. These relationships, foster self growth and self reflection with subsequent improved patient care outcomes, and also allow for an understanding of the importance of appropriate supervision of patient care – a clear area of focus for patient safety identified by the Institute of Medicine and other groups. These student mentoring relationships are cultivated best where the students are educated and with the teachers they have developed relationships with.

Many of our faculty, myself included, participate in research projects tightly linked to the work of our basic scientists at our school. This work requires intimate collaboration between the scientist, clinician, and clinician scientist as work in the laboratory is "translated" into improved patient care. A replacement hospital with a partnership will increase our patient base and allow for a larger group of individual patients to be eligible to participate in research studies. Our relatively small size has been an obstacle to this type of research in the past and a replacement hospital will be a great attraction for top notch clinicians and physician scientists who will take advantage of this opportunity to advance the care of patients through research and innovation.