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GOVERNOR

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

Testimony of Governor M. Jodi Rell

presented to the

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

March 15, 2010

Regarding House Bill 5027,

AAC THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT HEALTH CENTER'S FACILITIES PLAN

Chairwomen Handley and Willis, Ranking Members Debicella and Sawyer, and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today on a proposal that is critical to the future of education and health care in the State of Connecticut and will create a significant opportunity for economic development and job creation in the Hartford area for years to come. My comments address not the underlying bill but the proposed substitute language that I have offered which concerns the future of the John Dempsey Hospital of the University of Connecticut.

Last week – in concert with the University of Connecticut, the UConn Health Center, hospitals throughout the region, our Congressional delegation and many others – I proposed a landmark partnership that will transform the delivery of health care in Connecticut and lead to the creation of thousands of new jobs.

This plan brings together the resources of the state, UConn's schools of medicine and dentistry, Hartford Hospital, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, Connecticut Children's Medical Center and other health care facilities and providers. The centerpiece of the partnership is a new state-of-the-art patient tower and renovated hospital at UConn Health Center campus in Farmington.

When fully implemented, this proposal will produce a renovated, state-of-the-art John Dempsey Hospital as well as a health network with incredible reach throughout Connecticut. The updated teaching hospital will have increased classroom and lab space – helping to offset an expected shortage in medical and dental professionals. It will also have a nationally recognized cancer center and specialized institutes and advanced training – facilities that will be open to all health care professionals in the state.

These facilities will help lift the UConn schools of medicine and dentistry into the top tier of academics and research in the nation and create thousands of bioscience jobs in Connecticut that will propel our economy into the future.

My plan relies upon \$100 million in federal funding – money that must be approved before the project moves forward. Once the federal funds are secured, \$25 million for design and planning

will be made available from already approved UConn 21st Century funding. The plan also provides for \$227 million in future state bonding.

The plan provides for the establishment of a federally designated Comprehensive Cancer Center on the UConn Health Center's Farmington campus and creation of a Primary care Institute at Saint Francis open to all health care professionals to develop new models of chronic disease management and primary care education and treatment.

Under my proposal, UConn's neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) – a specialized unit that cares for premature babies and infants with other life-threatening conditions – would remain at John Dempsey Hospital but be run by Connecticut Children's Medical Center's regional children's system. This would allow John Dempsey to increase the beds that it devotes to adult patient care and provide the opportunity for the hospital to become self-sustaining.

My plan also calls for establishing a bioscience enterprise zone offering state tax breaks to private companies that create jobs and work with UConn Health Network partners.

This proposal is not just a prescription for improving the overall health of the UConn Health Center, which has struggled for years, but for revitalizing the health care delivery system and the economy of our state – both of which are in need of the proverbial shot in the arm.

Once again, I thank you for the opportunity to testify on this vitally important proposal and I urge you to favorably report the proposed substitute language so that we may begin to transform the John Dempsey Hospital at the University of Connecticut into a world-class research and teaching hospital, to better provide for the healthcare needs of our residents and to jumpstart the bioscience industry in Connecticut.