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Testimony

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

March 15, 2010

**HB5027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
HEALTH CENTER'S FACILITIES PLAN**

Senator Handley, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of **HB5027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT HEALTH CENTER'S FACILITIES PLAN**

My name is Bruce Gould. I'm an internist and primary care physician and for the past 22 years have served 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.

To put things in perspective, this is the third March that I have testified before you in support of assuring that the University of Connecticut Health Center has a viable clinical facility...2007, 2009 and now, 2010. The first time for a stand alone facility in Farmington, the second for a collaboration with Hartford Hospital and now for a regional collaboration that will move both the University, the state and health status of our citizens to a higher level. The healthcare environment is changing, the ground is moving under our feet...and if we fail to be innovative, to react to, or better, to anticipate these changes, we will become irrelevant and we will fail ourselves and those that depend on us. Health care reform in this country is inevitable. As a practitioner, especially one that cares for the poor, the uninsured and underinsured, I can tell you that our present system does not meet the needs of our people and does not fulfill its promise. We spend half again as much as any other industrialized nation and yet the health status of our population is worse than most other nations. We rely on high end technology for diagnosis and treatment, yet make little use of available tools to coordinate care,

share clinical information, target prevention and clinical intervention in timely and effective ways that might actually save lives...and yes, money.

To achieve a more effective and affordable health care system will require a number of elements:

- Well trained primary care providers, specialists, nurses, pharmacists and other professionals versed in the potential of all our technologies and able to work in patient centered teams focused on optimizing the outcomes of care.
- New technologies, treatments, screening tools developed at the bench addressing present and future health care challenges.
- Translational researchers and health services experts to speed the transfer of new ideas and knowledge to the bedside and the community where its use will result in the quality of outcomes that our patients deserve.

The University is already working to address some of these deficits. 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 across Connecticut and across the country 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 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.

HB5027 by providing a regional focus to health care delivery, education and research will facilitate the work already being done and provide the synergy between existing and often competing players that will elevate the process to a whole new level. It will provide a new and much needed facility to the University that will assure both the delivery of state of the art health care and education at our state medical/dental school and hospital. Through the creation of the Institute for Primary Care Education and Innovation at Saint Francis Hospital, it will promote the improvement of practice design and health care delivery at the

community level as well as the recruitment and training of the primary care providers of the future. The Health Disparities Institute will study and develop answers to the disparities in health status between population groups. The CT Institute for Clinical and Translational Sciences will speed the translation of knowledge and science into practice and outcomes improvement at the level of the community and the individual patient. .

I honestly believe that the University of Connecticut's Schools of Medicine and Dentistry cannot survive without a viable, appropriately sized and updated hospital. The proposal HB5027 will insure that survival while creating a regional integrated academic health center.

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 support **the UConn Health Center and HB 5027**. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,
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