

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. My name is Monty MacNeil, Dean, School of Dental Medicine, University of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding HB5027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT HEALTH CENTER'S FACILITIES PLAN

The Dental 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 an academic medical 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 the School of Medicine and John Dempsey Hospital.

In previous meetings with this Committee, I have provided data that describes our School's impressive accomplishments in education, research, patient care and service to this state. We are proud of these achievements and especially of our service to the poor and disadvantaged in Connecticut who rely on us so heavily for emergent and essential dental care. But we not do accomplish this alone. Here are but a few examples why our Dental School depends on a strong School of Medicine and a vibrant John Dempsey Hospital:

- The strength of our basic medical science curriculum, shared by medical and dental students, rests on the ability to recruit and retain exceptional physician educators to the Health Center. By nature, these physicians are also seeking out hospital practice situations that will provide long-term opportunity and stability as they develop their academic careers.
- The superb inter-professional relationship that exists, and which we desire to further promote, between students, residents and faculty in both schools depends on a health care environment that is clinically vibrant, academically driven and contemporary in plan and delivery.

- A significant subset of our large patient population are medically compromised, physically or developmentally disabled, or have other special needs. For example, we currently have over 750 mentally challenged adults under our care. These and other patients often require carefully coordinated medical care, especially when the dental care that we provide is of such extent that general anesthesia or in-patient hospitalization is needed. Our ability to continue to offer these very much needed services depends on a close relationship with a hospital and staff that truly understands our unique needs and can provide ready access to operating rooms and other medical services of high quality and sophistication.

I am confident that the facilities improvement plan described in HB5027 will elevate our hospital to the we all desire and will also resolve the fiscal uncertainty that has hovered over it for too many years. Unquestionably, that uncertainty has negatively impacted both of the hospital's partner schools. Most importantly, this plan will stabilize our physical faculty workforce and will improve our ability to recruit our future leaders in education, clinical care and research.

Our Dental School is the only one of 57 nationally that has all of its clinics organized within a hospital environment. For the reasons previously stated, this provides tremendous educational and clinical care advantages. Improvements in the Dental Clinics are long overdue and greatly needed. These facilities have fallen behind the national standard and have increasingly become an issue in student and faculty recruitment. The renovation plan described will bring our clinics up to par with the overall reputation of our School and, importantly, will enable us to expand our clinical care mission to Connecticut citizens. The patients we treat within the more than 90,000 patient visits we enable every year deserve improved facilities. In addition, the facility plan is accompanied by a commitment to increase our DMD class size and that of two of our primary care dental residency programs.

In summary, I believe that the improvement plan is essential to our Health Center and will enable the School of Dental Medicine to continue to be a point of pride for its university, the state and this legislature.

Thank you for your past support of our Health Center, your careful consideration and hopeful support of HB5027 and for this opportunity to speak to you today.