

**Commerce, Finance, Revenue and Bonding
and Labor and Public Employees Committees
Joint Public Hearing on Jobs and Jackson Laboratory**

October 20, 2011

Testimony

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members and members of the Commerce, Finance, Revenue & Bonding, and Labor and Public Employees Committees. My name is Dr George Kuchel. I am Director of the UConn Center on Aging, as well as Citicorp Chair in Geriatrics and Gerontology at the University of Connecticut Health Center. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today in support of the Jackson Laboratory proposal.

As a physician-scientist, I see patients, I teach and I conduct research. All of my activities and those of my colleagues, are directed towards a single goal - to improve the lives of our state's older adults, that is our parents, our neighbors and ultimately all of us, through clinical care, education and research. Personalized Medicine holds great promise since it will permit individualized treatment strategies. Already, it is possible to identify those individuals who must be treated differently since the nature of their cancer merits more (or less) aggressive treatment. Similarly, some patients require higher (or lower) medication doses given differences in their ability to eliminate specific drugs.

All of these considerations become extremely important as we get older since age is the greatest risk factor for conditions such as heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis and arthritis. However, successful aging is not just the absence of disease. When questioned, the vast majority of older adults are most concerned about their ability to remain independent and engaged in meaningful activities. To that end, our efforts are designed to "add life to years" as opposed to merely "adding years to life".

A personalized approach is essential to this effort since the manner in which we age is so highly variable. For example, many 80 and 90 year olds remain fully vibrant and active, while some 60 and 70 year olds become dependent and ultimately require placement in a nursing home.

The arrival of Jackson Laboratory in Farmington will have a transformational impact on our ability to develop new and more personalized interventions for enhancing function and independence in late life. In addition to having a National Cancer Institute designation as a Cancer Research Center, Jackson Laboratory is one of our nation's only five Nathan Shock Centers of Excellence in the Biology of Aging funded by the National Institute on Aging. These important assets, combined with Jackson Laboratory's rich experience and databases in Genetics, will have an almost immediate impact on our ability to recruit and retain the very best faculty and trainees, to obtain important new research grants and to begin addressing the most pressing causes of disability in older adults. These include problems such as memory loss due to Alzheimer's disease, declines in mobility and fractures resulting from sarcopenia and osteoporosis, frailty, difficulties in voiding, as well as ability to respond to infections. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the anticipated arrival of Jackson Laboratory has already had an impact on the ability of our state's many outstanding universities and hospitals to work collaboratively in improving the region's health, our national competitiveness and economic vitality. Thank you for your attention and I urge your support of the Jackson Laboratory proposal.