



March 12, 2013

Testimony On: H.B. 5460 ~ An Act Establishing A Plan For Emerging BioScience and Pharmaceutical Businesses in Southeastern Connecticut

Testimony To: Committee on Commerce

Positions: Supports

Provided By: John Beauregard, Executive Director, Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board (EWIB)
on behalf of EWIB & the Southeastern CT Enterprise Region (seCTer)

Senator LeBeau, Representative Perone, and members of the Commerce Committee, my name is John Beauregard and I am the Executive Director of the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board (EWIB). I am here today on behalf of two organizations, EWIB and the Southeastern CT Enterprise Region (seCTer). Together, we oversee workforce and economic development programming in the Southeastern portion of the state. We are focused on achieving regional coordination to ensure efforts pertaining to worker education and training are aligned to our economic development strategy.

The partnership of EWIB and seCTer has a strong track record in terms of aligning the innovations within our programming to the economic opportunities of our region. In fact, an earlier partnership between our two organizations, Pfizer, and the University of CT earned our region the National Award for Excellence in Economic Development, Education and Employment. We see similar potential within the framework of H.B. 5460.

One of the most important components in mapping our strategy for the future of our regional economy was contained in our area's Regional Innovation Grant planning process. This competitive federal award allowed us to complete a thorough analysis of both Workforce Demand and the skill sets in the region to meet them. The competencies we identified targeted both the retention and development of Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM) skills as the current and long-term drivers of our economy and this data was placed prominently in our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. These STEM skills we valued were exactly the kinds of skills that were contained in Pfizer's 2011 announcement of 1,100 layoffs.

One of the keys to our growth strategy would be developing the regional linkages between valued STEM skill sets in the region and potential for business development opportunities as highlighted in H.B. 5460. H.B. 5460 provides the mechanisms that will both entice the scientific community already residing in the region to stay while also providing the necessary skills to our current start-ups to grow here in Connecticut. Our two organizations are prepared to contribute to H.B. 5460 by leveraging a portion of the \$1.8M in federal H1-B programming currently being delivered by EWIB for high-tech OJT contract development in the region. It is this kind of state/local partnership that will assist our region and state in overcoming the challenging economic conditions we face.

One key factor that cannot be underestimated in terms of the economic impact of HB 5460 is its multiplier impact. The BioScience industry holds one of the highest job multiplier factors for creating additional jobs in the community. Unfortunately, our region experienced the two-sided nature of this fact when the recent restructuring that Pfizer undertook had extensive ripples that left our area not reaching its trough of job loss levels until 30 months after the state as a whole. This factor brought us a designation by a national study as one of the ten hardest hit employment regions in the country. Fortunately, the state of Connecticut remains firmly committed to investments that will grow our statewide BioScience cluster, but, to-date, state investments have been focused on areas other than Eastern CT.

We see H.B. 5460 as filling some critical economic development gaps in the region including: 1) very thinly resourced supports for small business development; 2) the ability to bolster and target a critical industry cluster with a local incubator effort that's so critical to entrepreneurial development; and, 3) the ability to create ideal career opportunities for a significant pool of very talented residents. In short, we see H.B. 5460 taking advantage of current robust partnerships in the region (EWIB, seCTer, and our Chambers to name a few) while also building on a foundation established by legacy industries and helping to protect the state's investment to-date.