

Testimony on SB 838, the Bioscience Innovation Act

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February 28, 2013

Senator LeBeau, Representative Perone, Senator Frantz, Representative Lavielle, and Members of the Committee – thank you for this opportunity to comment on SB 838, the Bioscience Innovation Act. I am Robert Alpern, Dean of the Yale University School of Medicine. I commend the Governor for proposing this bill, which will help to accelerate the development of new therapies and the growth of the bioscience industry. I also applaud the General Assembly for its support of investments in medical research, and I urge the Committee to approve SB 838.

Our understanding of human health and disease, including the genetic causes of disease, is advancing rapidly and is creating the potential for remarkable improvements in medical care. Yale is at the forefront of these advances, such as the work of the Yale Cancer Center, in collaboration with Gilead Life Sciences, to identify undiscovered genes for cancer. In the clinical setting, the Yale Cancer Center is applying the lessons of genomics to analyze the genetic code of patients' tumors to determine which drug regimen would be most effective. For patients and their families these are welcome improvements, but much work remains to be done in developing these new cures. I am pleased to say that SB 838 would provide an important source of financial support for research and the development of new therapies.

The legislation also seeks to foster the growth of the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries in the State. In the bioscience industry, the ability to generate new ideas, and to bring them to the market as viable therapies, relies upon extensive early stage research, typically conducted at universities. Hence the strength of the Connecticut bioscience industry depends on its leadership in medical research. This legislation would help to drive that innovation by supporting medical research, funding capital investments to expand research capacity in Connecticut, and facilitating the development of new products and companies.

SB 838 proposes a \$200 million Fund for Bioscience Innovation, allocated over 10 years, that would be awarded through a competitive process to universities, hospitals, non-profit organizations, and for-profit companies. It would establish a high-level advisory committee, appointed by the Administration and leadership of the General Assembly, for its expertise in medical research, development of drugs and devices, and health care delivery and financing. The advisory committee would help to set funding priorities for the Fund for Bioscience Innovation. The advisory committee would also oversee the critically important process of critiquing and selecting applications for funding after rigorous peer review. This model has worked exceptionally well in the Connecticut Stem Cell program as well as the Biomedical Trust Fund.

The Fund for Bioscience Innovation would be a valuable source of support for university faculty seeking to sustain the flow of new inventions to industry. It could also aid in the recruitment of researchers with specific skills, such as bioinformatics, or the

analysis of the huge amounts of data acquired through gene sequencing. The Fund for Bioscience Innovation could also support "proof of concept" studies that are particularly important in the transition of inventions from universities to industry.

This legislation represents an important commitment to improving the quality of life for Connecticut residents, and for growing the State economy. I respectfully recommend that the General Assembly approve SB 838.