

*TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING
COMMITTEE
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Testimony Supporting Senate Bill No. 840

AN ACT CONCERNING NEXT GENERATION CONNECTICUT

Senator Fonfara, Representative Widlitz and distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill No. 840, An Act Concerning Next Generation Connecticut.

Connecticut's long-term economic competitiveness depends upon the creation of a strong public research university with vibrant educational opportunities and research in the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Through investment of \$1.54 billion in capital funding contained in this bill and significant operating expenses over a ten year period beginning in FY 2015, the Governor has proposed Next Generation Connecticut. This plan will encourage an important expansion of STEM activities at the University of Connecticut (UConn), drive innovation, enhance job creation and promote economic growth. With targeted and strategic investments in facilities, faculty and students, UConn will become a preeminent STEM institution, fueling Connecticut's economy with new technologies, highly skilled graduates, businesses, patents and licenses, and high-wage STEM jobs.

According to a recent analysis of 171 college majors, eight million U.S. jobs will be available in STEM fields and Connecticut projects a similar trend. The Connecticut Department of Labor, for example, projects the need for 54% more biomedical engineers. Nationally, overall employment is projected to grow 9.6% from 2010 to 2020. But report after report shows that the next generation of American employees will be unprepared for these jobs. Of 34 industrialized countries, for example, American students rank 17th in science and 25th in math scores, respectively. This gap limits our nation's ability to solve the complex problems of our time, inhibits the innovation required to remain competitive, and results in severe long-term economic consequences for our country.