

Testimony for Senate Bill 840, “Next Generation Connecticut”

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Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony today in regards to Senate Bill 840, *Next Generation Connecticut*. I am Dustyn Nelson of Torrington and support this bill because it not only benefits the University of Connecticut, but the entire State of Connecticut, positioning our state on the global stage.

Not only are the traditional majors such as chemistry and engineering part of the STEM initiative, but agriculture is included through the fields of biotechnology, environmental sustainability, and human health.

The University of Connecticut originated from the Storrs Agricultural School and with that foundation grew into the University we know today as one of the top research institutions in the nation that is giving back right here in the State of Connecticut. UConn could not be what it is today without the backbone provided by the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources providing a foundation for the rest of the University based on ground-breaking legislation of the Morrill Land-Grant Acts. UConn is producing a future job force that will drive the economic development in Connecticut through strategic focus in the STEM arena. This will attract businesses to the State of Connecticut in their hopes of taking advantages of the well educated workforce that the University will provide.

The increases in new faculty and building construction will attract students that are the best and brightest of our state, nationally and globally, which will help in the State of Connecticut’s ability to compete on a global economic level. Connecticut has one of the most diverse agriculture systems in the country driving an economic force of over 3.5 billion dollars encompassing all aspects of STEM teaching and Research. Our agriculture industry, heavily entrenched in the STEM concept, currently employs over 20,000 and through increased STEM funding can only increase exponentially. With *Next Generation Connecticut* funding this industry will have the opportunity to grow through advancements in agricultural sciences, a vital part of STEM.

Let me tell you a bit about myself, as a 3rd generation horticulturist my hope is to achieve a position as an Extension agent with an institution such as the University of Connecticut. An Extension agent applies the research produced at land grant universities and agriculture experiment stations in a practical way for the public to benefit from their investment. For example, I hope to reach out to wholesale nurseries about increasing sustainability by using concepts such as Integrated Pest Management.

Wholesale nurseries such as Prides Corner Farm in Lebanon generate over 34 million dollars in revenue, employ more than 200 people, and produce on over 300 acres. Sustainability is of utmost importance for producers such as Pride’s Corner, therefore it is important that they have the latest technology and scientific developments in the industry on topics such as water utilization, which is currently being provided by Extension Agents at Land Grant Universities.

The world's growing population creates many concerns, making human health of utmost importance. The research being conducted at UConn regarding obesity and nutritional sciences will directly affect the health of our State and Nation, allowing us to have a more sustainable and healthier approach to our lives. What is more important than human health? The research being conducted has the potential to touch the lives of all, from infants to the elderly.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the importance of an investment in the University of Connecticut which will ultimately result in an investment in our state and the world as a whole.