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FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE

Testimony Submitted by Michael W. Renfro

**S.B. No. 840 - An Act Concerning Next Generation Connecticut**

I appreciate the opportunity to present testimony regarding S.B. No. 840 - An Act Concerning Next Generation Connecticut. This Act is of critical importance to the growth of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs that provide the talented workforce needed by Connecticut's employers. Educating this workforce not only provides for the demand of today's industries but also produces the innovations and entrepreneurs that will create tomorrow's future employers in Connecticut. It is vital that Connecticut invest in this future where STEM disciplines are expected play such an important role.

Investments in new faculty hiring at the University of Connecticut during the past decade in Mechanical Engineering have enabled the program to increase the number of students and to introduce new courses and concentrations in strategic areas. These concentrations in areas such as Aerospace and Manufacturing are aimed at providing an even better workforce that meets the demands of Connecticut's many technology-oriented industries. During the past 6 years alone, the number of graduates from the Mechanical Engineering program has doubled, but the demand for UConn engineering students continues to outpace what can be accommodated with current faculty and resources. Not only is the demand from industry strong, but the number of student applicants with a desire to earn an engineering degree continues to rise. There is sufficient supply of talented students interested in engineering and there is demand for these students to have degrees in Mechanical Engineering from UConn. Next Generation Connecticut's 10-year, \$1.5 billion investment will enable the growth of these programs that are of such strategic importance to the future of Connecticut's economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal.

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