

Public Hearing

Testimony

March 4, 2013

By

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Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony supporting Senate Bill 840: "Next Generation Connecticut".

The mission of the Department of Pathobiology & Veterinary Science (PVS) is the study of disease processes that affect animals and man. PVS consists of several units, including, bacteriology, virology, immunology, and pathology, and operates the only fully accredited Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory in New England. The Department is the only unit at the University and in the State of Connecticut that has the expertise and mission to implement programs for teaching, research and outreach for protecting the health of animals and humans from diseases transmitted between animals and man (zoonoses). PVS works in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture, Connecticut Department of Public Health, and the Department of Environmental Protection, to implement state and federal programs for zoonoses and for animal health in Connecticut as well as the Northeast Region of the United States. The department is also the home for the Center of Excellence for Vaccine Research (CEVR) and it is in this context that I wish to describe to you how the passage this bill will benefit Uconn and the people of the State of Connecticut. CEVR was established in 1998 and was the first and is the oldest academic, animal vaccine center in the country. Its' mission is the elucidation of the methods of pathogenesis of, and immune responses to, primary bacterial and viral pathogens with the goal of developing safe and effective vaccines through the proof-of-concept stage. Once vaccines are developed to that stage, we seek corporate partners to further develop and market these vaccines. Eleven faculty from four different departments are members of CEVR. Twenty-one graduate students (PhD & MS) are either in progress or have graduated with the aid of funds through CEVR. These graduates have gone on to productive careers in academia and industry. We have also employed six Research Associates/Research Assistants, six Postdoctoral Fellows and hosted six visiting scholars. CEVR faculty have brought in in excess of \$16.5 million dollars in extramural support, developed four vaccines, two diagnostic tests, and published extensively on the results of their research in peer-reviewed journals.

We offer a highly sought after graduate course in vaccinology, “Vaccines, Mechanisms of Immune Protection”. With the addition of new faculty funded by Next Generation Connecticut, we propose to expand our research directions to include vaccines for zoonotic diseases and to further our course offerings to include an undergraduate course in vaccinology. The new faculty hires are expected to develop close ties with, and funding from, industrial partners involved in vaccine development and manufacture. Successful marketing of vaccines developed by CEVR scientists will provide Uconn with royalty streams, which are currently limited. It will also result in the expansion of the numbers of our graduate students, renovation and expansion of our research infrastructure, and further strengthen our competitiveness for extramural federal funds. Realizing all of this will help to elevate Uconn’s ranking in the country. It will also result in the hiring of additional research support staff, which will help to grow Connecticut’s economy. Start-up and other small vaccine companies will recognize the benefits of locating in the Park due in part to the vaccine expertise that resides in CEVR as well as the educated workforce ready to move their companies forward.

In summary, I believe that the infusion of these funds will greatly enhance existing vaccine research efforts, industrial collaborations, and royalties, while stimulating the economy. Overall this should result in a significant return on investment for the State of Connecticut.