Statement in support of the NextGenCT bill

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I support the NextGenCT bill, which is a part of the effort of Governor Dannel Malloy to spurn a bright future for our state economy through advances in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). Conceptually, STEM encompasses a broad range of high tech competencies to include the life sciences, engineering, information technologies, energy research, and others. I would like to speak on behalf of the life sciences component of STEM today.

First, let me briefly summarize the state of life sciences economies in the U.S. so that we can put our state into perspective. Vibrant life sciences economies exist today in California, both at San Francisco and the LA region. On the east coast, life sciences is going well in the research triangle in North Carolina. But the real powerhouse of life science economy is the Boston and the New York City areas. In my opinion, if we were to increase our efforts in Connecticut, we could become a part of a vibrant life sciences corridor that spans New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts.

The NextGenCT bill has excellent prospects to nucleate growth in the life sciences industry in our state. This is because we already have a good start. We have two excellent universities here, the University of Connecticut and Yale, which are both engaged in biomedical research. Recently, exciting things have been occurring at the University of Connecticut. We have attracted the Jackson Laboratories to open a research consortium at the University of Connecticut, whose efforts are in personalized medicine and genomics. We also will soon begin building a tech park at the Storrs campus where new and existing companies can interface with the intellectual expertise of the research faculty. For several years now, we have also run the U.Conn. Stem Cell Institute, which has already spawned startup biotechnology companies in Farmington. If the State were to increase funding of STEM endeavors, I have no doubt but that our growing life sciences presence will continue to expand further.

So, it is my opinion that Governor Malloy's vision is forward looking. Manufacturing jobs and big pharma are not likely to come back to Connecticut. We need to be on the wave of cutting edge and modern economies of the next generation, which will all likely have a STEM flavor.

On a personal note, I can tell you my laboratory is involved in personalized medicine research and stem cells. In the years to come, it is likely that my lab will have interfaces with local biotechnology companies both existing and future. It is an exciting time to be involved in such advancements. In conclusion, I think our best prospects for a good economy are to look forward to emerging economic enterprises such as the life sciences. I believe that it is easier to assemble something new rather than to go back to our economies of the past, which have dwindled. The University of Connecticut and Yale can train the workforce of our future high tech economy, and help to keep our intellectual capitol here at home.