



University of Connecticut Health Center

COMMERCE COMMITTEE TESTIMONY FEBRUARY 27, 2014

**Marc Lalande, Professor of Genetics and Developmental Biology, UCHC and
Director, UConn Stem Cell Institute and Institute for Systems Genomics**

H.B. No. 5042 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGENERATIVE MEDICINE RESEARCH FUND.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to voice the University of Connecticut's enthusiastic support of HB No. 5042, An Act Concerning the Regenerative Medicine Fund. UConn and its stem cell research community are very grateful for the 2-year extension of funding that is proposed through this Act.

This additional research support is essential to maintain and build upon the accomplishments so far achieved at UConn including:

- 1) Forty laboratories supported by the CT stem cell initiative;
- 2) Investigators of the UConn Stem Cell Institute who have leveraged the State of CT's investment in stem cell research to obtain over \$103M of federal extramural funding since 2007.
- 3) Institutional commitment to the new \$52 million Cell and Genome Sciences building at the UConn Health Center in Farmington, equipped with the latest technologies for studying stem cells and their genomes, and housing two companies through UConn's Technology Incubator Program.
- 4) ImStem Biotechnology, a company launched at UConn, has recently built a Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) facility with private venture capital funds as a first step towards clinical trials for Multiple Sclerosis;
- 5) We have deposited 4 human embryonic stem cell lines in the NIH repository of lines that are eligible for federal funding. We have distributed 229 stem cell lines to laboratories across the United States and throughout the world. Just this week, UConn announced an agreement with KeraFAST, a global supplier of biological research tools, to market stem cells developed here to investigators studying genetic disorders around the world.
- 6) UConn stem cell researchers have published over 200 articles in scientific journals and books
- 7) The number of full time equivalents of employment created at UConn has risen from 2 to over 35 per year since the beginning of the program of 2007.
- 8) UConn has established a new technology, called gene editing, to modify the genome of human embryonic stem cells for more efficient disease modeling and drug screening. Importantly, this advance bridges two areas of economic importance to our state: Genomics and Stem Cells.

For our community of stem cell scientists at Yale, Wesleyan and UConn, it is critical that the new funding continue the strategic expansion not only of regenerative medicine, but also of other fields of established research strength in engineering tissues and the genome of stem cells, two areas that are poised for partnerships with CT industry to discover and market new drugs and therapeutics for human disease.

Thank you for your attention, for your support of the University of Connecticut and its academic medical center and for your vision in expanding the funding for stem cell research. We urge your support of HB 5042.