Kimberly Dodge-Kafka
Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing
March 6, 2014

H.B. No. 6824 An Act Concerning the State Budget For the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth 2017, and Making Appropriations Thereafter and Other Provisions Related to Revenue

Good evening, distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is **Kimberly Dodge-Kafka and I am an Associate Professor in the Dept of Cell Biology and the Pat and Jim Calhoun Center for Cardiology** at the University of Connecticut Health Center. Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns with you regarding the elimination of funding for the Biomedical Research Trust Fund in the Department of Public Health's budget.

As a biomedical researcher, my work is contingent on finding outside funding in order to perform my research. There is no alternative. It is an absolute requirement. Historically, this funding came from the United States government, but now, government agencies are only funding between 6-12% of all submitted grants, so statistically, it is like searching for a needle in a haystack to get national funding. Luckily, the CT government has historically funded cutting edge, health-related research that is awarded via a competitive grant process, and last year, I was received such a grant that awarded me **$207, 440 to investigate the mechanisms responsible for induction congestive heart failure.**

Congestive heart failure (CHF) is a syndrome accountable for ~300,000 deaths each year in the United States alone(*1*). In Connecticut, heart disease is responsible for more than 25% of deaths demonstrating that it is a significant health risk to our CT population. Despite our current therapeutic options for treating CHF, the five-year mortality following diagnosis remains at 50%. Hence, what we are doing is not working and we must find new avenues for drug development.

My work has focused on the cellular location of a key protein that we previously found, through genetic manipulation, is required for induction of cardiac disease. Through this CT funded grant, I have clearly shown, that much like real estate, location, location, location of this protein is a key determinant for its role in cardiac disease. I have shown that by disrupting the location of this protein, we can block the disease. Furthermore, because of the support of this grant, we are currently developing novel therapeutics to do just this in human patients, therefore moving forward clinical medicine with the potential to launch new business ventures.

My lab is currently funded by this grant as well as a grant supported by the American Heart Association. By receiving this generous grant, I have been able to support two graduate students and hire and a new technician for the lab, providing jobs to our CT population. Additionally, it has allowed me to gather the background and experiments to apply for National grants, and I recently submitted a grant to the NIH based upon this research and am optimistic of its successful outcome.

I am grateful to the state of Connecticut for its visionary leadership and financial support of the growing and promising field of bioscience. CT has historically been a leader in field of bioscience and our government has played a key role in bringing and developing this growth industry in CT. Being a principal investigator in these times of reduced funding and budget crisis is becoming increasingly difficult. As researchers, we are constantly looking for ways to leverage resources and more often than not are cobbling together multiple funding sources to conduct our research.

The state support of my research is critical and I strongly urge you to restore funding to the Biomedical Research Trust Fund. Thank you.