

Kevin Claffey
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

Distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is **Dr. Kevin Claffey, a Professor** at the University of Connecticut Health Center in the Department of Cell Biology and member of The NEAG Comprehensive Cancer Center. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening in opposition to the proposed budget eliminating funding for the Biomedical Research Trust Fund in the Department of Public Health's budget.

As you may know, the fund was established by the General Assembly as a competitive grant process to assist in underwriting cutting edge, health-related biomedical research. Just this past year, I successfully competed for funding through the program and was awarded a \$341,572 contract to conduct just that kind of research.

The contract supported the screening and identification of novel drugs to target excess vascular permeability that occurs in Diabetes, Heart Attack and Stroke and contributes to complications of amputation, heart failure, brain damage and mortality in these diseases. The project was a collaborative with UCONN Storrs School of Pharmacy, The Calhoun Cardiology Center and the Center for Vascular Biology at the Health Center. Importantly, we have found several promising lead drugs with this funding and are now moving forward to test them in disease models and apply for national funding and pharmaceutical industry partners.

The grant provided funds to maintain a technician and two post-doctoral fellows that might have been terminated without such support. In essence, the Biomedical Research Program provides; 1) support for maintaining jobs in an environment of reduced national funding resources, 2) project development to be competitive for national resources, 3) support for training of highly technical biomedical personnel to feed into the regional academic and biomedical industry and, 4) the ability to launch innovative projects which could provide significant returns to the state in the form of improved therapies and new business ventures, a key goal for Bioscience CT.

The state has made tremendous investments in the growing field of bioscience and while I don't envy you in this budget crisis, I employ you to reconsider complete elimination of the program, and permit the DPH to continue the program in a focused and/or limited manner.

Thank you for your attention and I urge you to restore funding to the Biomedical Research Trust Fund.