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**Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
Public Hearing  
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**HB 6813 AN ACT REQUIRING TRANSPARENCY OF EXPENDITURES BY THE HIGHER EDUCATION FOUNDATIONS**

**HB 5484 AN ACT REQUIRING AUDITS BY THE AUDITORS OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS OF FOUNDATIONS ESTABLISHED FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**SB230 AN ACT CONCERNING THE FUNDS AND RECORDS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT FOUNDATION**

I appreciate the opportunity to share with the members of the Higher Ed Committee my perspectives on proposed legislation concerning the UConn Foundation, HB 6813, HB5484 and SB230.

My name is Bruce Liang, and I work at the UConn Health Center where I perform several roles. I serve as the Director of the Pat and Jim Calhoun Cardiology Center, hold the Ray Neag Distinguished Chair in Vascular Biology, and am the Interim Dean of the School of Medicine.

These positions enable me to offer, what I hope you will think, are valuable perspectives concerning the critical importance private philanthropy must play for the UConn Health Center.

Raising private contributions is an essential responsibility for every outstanding academic health center. Philanthropic support is a crucial component in recruiting and retaining top clinicians and researchers, in supporting innovative biomedical research and top quality clinical activities, and in providing scholarships and program support to medical and dental students.

Donors provide resources that are intended to supplement, not supplant, the public funding the UConn Health receives through its state appropriation. I would remind the Committee that the state appropriation supports only 24% of the Health Center's annual operating budget.

Private donations are used by academic health centers like ours to endow faculty chairs. The most accomplished medical and dental school faculty seeks these honored positions. These endowments enable us to offer competitive packages and compete successfully for the services of outstanding clinical, research and teaching faculty.

At the Health Center, our generous philanthropists enabled us to secure the services of the leaders of our genomics, vascular, heart disease, aging and cancer research programs. They were all attracted to UConn by the promise of exciting discovery.

As a result of their work, we are achieving grant funding exceeding \$90 million a year, discovering knowledge for the diagnosis and treatment for a range of conditions with unmet medical needs, and moving new technologies from the research bench to the private sector for clinical applications. Examples include testing a new blood test to diagnose heart attack, a new therapy for heart failure, a vaccine-based cancer treatment, a novel way to diagnose and treat aging-associated decline in immune function, as well as understanding how differences in our DNAs may result in side effects from drugs or proneness to disease.

As the Director of the Pat and Jim Calhoun Cardiology Center, I understand the value that the Calhouns' generosity means to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of heart disease. Their contributions have led to the Calhoun

Cardiology Center being recognized as the best hospital for heart care by Women's Choice, and as an award-winning heart center for the diagnosis and treatment of heart attack and cardiac failure by the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology.

And as the Interim Dean of our School of Medicine, I also appreciate the contributions that donors make in funding scholarship to assist our outstanding medical students. Medical education is a noble but costly undertaking that involves imparting complex clinical and evolving scientific information in a personal and interactive academic environment. Many Connecticut students would not be able to attend medical school without the financial assistance provided by our donors.

We are also establishing scholarships to encourage our students to become primary care physicians to meet the needs of Connecticut residents. Other scholarships are being established to encourage careers committed to investigating new cures for medical diseases.

Private philanthropy, as I hope I have explained, is integral to virtually every aspect of our teaching, research and clinical missions. It is increasingly important in light of the economy threatening to reduce the level of state support the Health Center receives.

All academic medical centers, whether or not they are public centers like the UConn Health Center, strive to engage patients in philanthropy. Seeking donations from grateful patients is also a standard practice for every hospital in Connecticut and throughout the country.

Patients and their families find that supporting medical research and programs through philanthropy is a positive way to channel their gratitude, respond to a challenging diagnosis or deal with the loss of a loved one. Most grateful patients direct their donations to research and clinical programs as a way to give back.

Many grateful patients and other donors feel more comfortable making their donations to a private non-profit organization than to a public entity. As I am sure you understand, most patients value the privacy of their health information and some want to maintain the privacy of their giving decisions. As a result, they seek the assurance of a private entity.

That was the case with a patient who insisted on not publicly revealing the name when making a large donation to improve the physical plant at UConn's John Dempsey Hospital. We also have had loyal medical alumni making donations for scholarships without publicity. Making their contributions through the UConn Foundation ensures their confidentiality and garners their trust.

Any legislative effort that would undercut that confidentiality and confidence or deny, or even limit, the UConn Health Center's ability to operate a grateful patient program would place the Health Center at a significant disadvantage. It would first and foremost create a barrier for grateful patients to give back and express their support to find new cures for disease. It would negatively affect our hospital and clinical programs, and our schools of medicine and dental medicine, while serving no public purpose.

For these reasons, I am here to urge you not to take any actions that would create new obstacles to private giving or otherwise put the UConn Foundation at a competitive disadvantage in securing private support for the UConn Health Center.