Appropriations Committee Hearing Testimony
In Support of HB7118
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My laboratory studies the earliest stages of colon cancer using a multi-omics approach. As part of our work, we have performed colonoscopy screening on hundreds of patients at the JDH and created a large human database of early neoplasia, including detailed information on demographics, somatic mutations, epigenetics and microbiome. We also model many of the molecular defects present in the human colon using genetically modified mouse models. One of our major research goals is to develop strategies that can prevent cancer development, using natural products (walnuts) or non-toxic compounds (aspirin) to reduce colon inflammation and limit the likelihood of cancer development.

For many years we have been forced to pay out of our extramural research funding for state obligations that we are not responsible for, a difficult situation we did not create. This is essentially a huge tax that is imposed upon those of us with extramural funding. In a time when the pay line is at an historic low at the NIH (approximately 8 percentile), just being able to secure NIH funding is a terrific accomplishment, but then to be punished by the state through no fault of our own by imposing this added burden upon us that has the net result of immediately making our laboratories less competitive than other institutions around the country.

There is so much we could do with this additional funding that is denied us - hire additional personnel, purchase needed equipment and reagents, etc. Having to pay such high fringe rates (much higher than almost anywhere else in the United States) is really putting us at a huge competitive disadvantage with other research institutions.

The state must absorb this added cost and not pass it on to hard-working scientists within the State of Connecticut.