

THOMAS V. MIKE MILLER, JR.
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE



MICHAEL E. BUSCH
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATE HOUSE

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401-1991

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Robert M. Hallenbeck
VP Advanced Bioprocessing
BD Biosciences
250 Schilling Circle, MC 924
Cockeysville, MD 21030

Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission:

We understand that you have started meeting to analyze the statute, and are seeking input as you proceed to draft the regulations to implement the Maryland E-Innovation Initiative. As the lead sponsors of this important legislation, we thank you for conducting an open public process and would like to share our legislative intent and the goals in putting forward this Initiative so they can be incorporated into the implementation as well.

There is a vital link between recruiting and retaining the world's brightest scientific minds and growing the state's economy. Our goal in passing this legislation and establishing this program is to leverage both public *and* private investment to provide Maryland with an advantage in the global competition for the best minds – and the opportunities, jobs and industries that will be created by their work. Our goal was *not* simply to create an additional fund that universities and colleges can tap to strengthen their academic programs and enhance their reputations. This is an extremely important aspect of the legislation that we hope will be kept at the forefront of your discussions as you draft regulations and begin implementation.

To achieve that goal, we anticipated that the program would be structured to support researchers whose university-based work holds the greatest promise of driving economic development outside of the walls of the university itself. The bill specified areas in which Maryland has the potential to create economic engines and we hope that creating the kind of chairs and professorships that will grow our economy will be further made clear through your work.

We realize this means that not every notable academic regardless of field will fit into the goals of the program. In fact, the Initiative should specifically support researchers who are globally or nationally recognized experts in the target fields, and have an interest in or history of entrepreneurial activity. This engagement might include launching a company, partnering with an existing company, or launching or working with an incubator or accelerator, among other things.

We also understood that in passing the legislation that not every university and college will be ready to compete for funds in the first year, and it is possible that not every institution will receive a grant if they do not put forward a proposal consistent with the purpose of the Initiative.

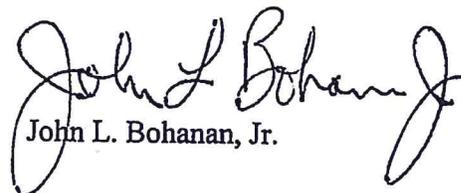
These funds are limited and we cannot afford to dilute the purpose and goal of the program. We encourage you to develop a process that allows all institutions to compete, but we do not expect – nor would we encourage – a process that waters down the Initiative's impact by spreading its limited resources so thin that the overarching goals are not achieved.

Finally, we encourage you to keep the state's budget cycle in mind. While we envision a five-year program, the state's budget cycle runs annually. It would be devastating to your work – and to our goal – if a program is designed that fails to spend money within the fiscal year for which it was allocated. In drafting the bill, we knew that certain institutions might be ready to move forward more quickly and we affirmatively sought this goal. The ability for all institutions to potentially participate was accommodated by placing an overall limit per institution that cannot be exceeded until the end of the 5-year period if funds remain available.

Thank you for your service to our State and your hard work in administering this important Initiative. We commend you for conducting an open public process and if legislative changes are needed to ensure the intent of the program is carried out, we are happy to work with you in that regard. We sponsored this legislation because we see the potential for significant economic transformation through this Initiative. Maryland has tremendous higher education assets and we look forward to the work of the Initiative in successfully leveraging both public and private investment for the greatest economic impact possible.

Sincerely,


Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.


John L. Bohanan, Jr.

cc: Thomas Dann
