



BIOTECHNOLOGY
INDUSTRY
ORGANIZATION

February 7, 2006

The Honorable Judy Biggert
U. S. House of Representatives
1317 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo
U. S. House of Representatives
205 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Biggert and Representative Eshoo:

On behalf of the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO), an organization that represents more than 1,100 biotechnology companies, academic institutions, state biotechnology centers and related organizations that are involved in the research and development of health care, agricultural, industrial and environmental biotechnology products, I am writing to express my support for your efforts to enact legislation this year that will prohibit health insurers from discriminating against individuals based on genetic information.

In an era filled with scientific discoveries, one of the most significant accomplishments has been the completion of the sequencing of the human genome. This information will be enormously powerful. Armed with this data, scientists have already identified genetic markers for various diseases and health conditions including cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, Huntington's disease, and cystic fibrosis, and developed genetic tests to identify predispositions to specific conditions. Over the next several years, even more breakthroughs are expected as science advances.

Understanding the function of genes in key biological processes will also become an even greater part of drug discovery and development. This information could, for example, tell us how and why diseases afflict certain people and why certain medications are safe and effective for some people, but not others with the same diagnosis. Thus, genomic information could speed the development of cures and treatments for illnesses that afflict millions of Americans and their families.

1225 EYE STREET, N.W., SUITE 400
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-5958

202-962-9200
FAX 202-962-9201
<http://www.bio.org>

The Honorable Judy Biggert
The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo
Page 2

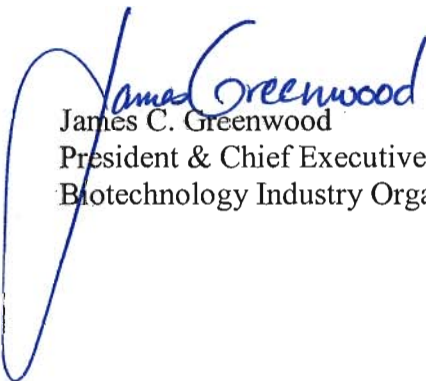
However, public fear and anxiety are obstacles to achieving this goal. That's why BIO supports federal legislation prohibiting inappropriate use of genetic information by health insurers. People must have confidence they can take advantage of technological developments without fear that the information gained from this technology will be used against them. For example, with the information individuals could get from genetic tests, they could take steps – such as improving their diet, avoiding certain drugs or foods, and getting preventive medical care – that are likely to improve their health. However, if individuals believe this information will be used to discriminate against them, they may not seek it.

BIO has long supported national policies to ensure that individuals' personal medical information, including genetic information, is safeguarded against misuse. It is essential to assure the public that the great promise of biotechnology research will not be tarnished by abuses of this technology.

Consequently, BIO supports carefully drafted, bipartisan legislation, such as H.R. 1227, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA), that prohibits discrimination against individuals based on genetic information.

We appreciate your support of the biotech industry and look forward to working with you. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me or Brent Del Monte, Vice President of Government Relations, at (202) 962-9200.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Greenwood". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping loop on the left side that extends downwards.

James C. Greenwood
President & Chief Executive Officer
Biotechnology Industry Organization