

**Testimony of the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council (MBC) and the  
Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO)**

**Hearing of the Massachusetts Joint Committee  
on Natural Resources and Agriculture**

*November 13, 2003*

**Regarding House Bill 3565:  
The Establishment of a Food Biotechnology Task Force**

On behalf of the members of the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council (MBC) and in conjunction with the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO), please accept this testimony regarding Massachusetts House Bill 3565. This legislation calls for the creation of a food biotechnology task force—staffed by several state agencies representatives, including those from the Department of Food and Agriculture as well as the University of Massachusetts. While we applaud the interest this legislation demonstrates in the promise of biotechnology, we have concerns that this task force may duplicate existing federal oversight and regulation.

The proposed functions of the task force are already being addressed by a host of federal regulatory agencies. In fact, the biotechnology industry is one of the most heavily regulated and closely monitored industries in this country. Crops and foods improved through biotechnology are subject to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) oversight. These agencies review biotechnology crops for human and animal safety, as well as environmental safety. Enormous resources are expended on the federal level to perform such evaluations and ensure efficient, science-based, risk management in all aspects of agriculture biotechnology—domestically and internationally.

Working within this federal coordinated framework of the USDA, EPA and FDA, companies and research entities can spend from two to ten years and \$4-8 million dollars—on average—to meet the full spectrum of regulatory testing and evaluation necessary for new product approval.

This process is working well: Biotech crops and foods are proven to be as safe as, if not safer than, conventionally produced counterparts. As the commonwealth determines how to allocate its finite resources, MBC and BIO believe the monies required for such a task force would be better spent on priorities that do not duplicate federal activities. We hope you will agree and decide to oppose the establishment of the task force proposed by HB 3565. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions about our position or if we can be a further resource on this or any other biotech-related issue.

*The Massachusetts Biotechnology Council (MBC), founded in 1985, is a not-for-profit organization that provides services and support for the Massachusetts biotechnology industry. The MBC is committed to advancing the development of critical new science, technology and medicines that benefit people worldwide. Representing over 400 companies, academic institutions and service organizations involved in biotechnology and healthcare, the MBC works with public leaders to advance policy and promote education, while providing member programs and services.*

*The Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) is the national trade organization, based in Washington, DC, representing more than 1000 biotechnology companies, academic institutions and biotechnology centers in all 50 states and 33 countries. BIO members are involved in the research and development of health care, agricultural and environmental biotechnology products.*