

January 3, 2023



Cambridge City Councilors
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Cambridge, MA 02139

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Massachusetts Biotechnology Council
700 Technology Square, 5th Floor
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Honorable Members of the Cambridge City Council:

On behalf of MassBio and our 1,600+ members, we appreciate your consideration of these written comments in opposition to the proposed ban to new laboratory construction in the City of Cambridge.

MassBio, and our member companies, want to be a good neighbor and partner with the City of Cambridge but we have serious concerns with the recent lab ban proposals and we urge the Ordinance Committee to not adopt the Callendar petition.

The argument that new lab development is crowding out potential new housing development is a false choice and ignores existing barriers toward housing developing, such as the City's 2017 adoption of a new inclusionary zoning policy that has subsequently reduced the cumulative number of market rate units built by 33% in the five years since its passage. Combined with current market dynamics, sky-high construction and lending costs, and growing office vacancies, the choice for Cambridge is not between permitting lab or housing. It is more likely to be lab or nothing.

This petition also ignores the realities of what makes Cambridge such a dynamic and prosperous city. Despite being only 22% of total property value in the City, labs across Cambridge provide 31% of all tax revenue, allowing residents to have one of the lowest residential property tax rates in the state. Labs also require people to work in-person, generating revenue to local businesses. As traditional offices sit empty and vacancies increase significantly—threatening the vibrancy of Cambridge squares and neighborhoods, City officials should be seeking ways to encourage smart lab development, not killing it with a sweeping, across-the-board ban.

MassBio represents a wide range of member organizations, including biotech companies, teaching hospitals, and academic institutions, the majority of which are directly engaged in cutting-edge research, development, and manufacturing of innovative products that improve the lives of sick people around the world.

We hope that the proposed bans to new laboratory construction are not adopted and that we can continue the stakeholder dialogue to ensure that we can identify the best path forward. MassBio and our members want to work with the City, and all the relevant stakeholders, to be part of crafting a real solution that achieves our shared goals.

Sincerely,

Kendalle Burlin O'Connell, Esq.
Chief Executive Office & President