

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, MD
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Senate HELP Committee Hearing: *Modernizing the National Institutes of Health: Faster Discoveries, More Cures*

Dear Chair Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and Members of the Senate HELP Committee:

On behalf of the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council (MassBio) and our members, I thank you for convening this important hearing, *“Modernizing the National Institutes of Health: Faster Discoveries, More Cures”*, and for the Committee’s focus on how NIH can better deliver lifesaving breakthroughs for American families. MassBio represents more than 1,600 biotechnology, pharmaceutical, medical device, academic, and other stakeholders committed to advancing innovative therapies and strengthening the Commonwealth’s world-leading life sciences ecosystem. We support this Committee and Congress for the broad bipartisan effort in maintaining robust NIH funding in FY2026 budget and hope to see it passed quickly.

Massachusetts: A Model for NIH Funding

Massachusetts is a vivid example of how NIH fuels discovery and supports the development of new treatments. In FY2024, Massachusetts-based researchers received nearly \$3.5 billion in NIH funding across 5,776 awards.¹ This funding directly supports research institutions, strengthens local supply chains, and helps translate scientific progress into new medicines for patients across the country. NIH-backed science helps de-risk early-stage breakthroughs, builds the specialized workforce that companies need, and creates the academic–industry partnerships that make new startups and programs viable. This public investment functionally crowds in private capital that turns the promising ideas into drug candidates and leads them through development, clinical trials, and ultimately to patients. That’s a key reason why Massachusetts-headquartered biopharma companies attracted \$7.89 billion in venture capital in 2024: investors are more willing to commit long-term, high-risk capital when there’s a strong pipeline of NIH-enabled research, clear translational pathways, and confidence that the federal research enterprise will remain stable and predictable.

¹ MassBio 2025 Industry Snapshot; https://www.massbio.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/FINAL-2025_IndustrySnapshot.pdf

Biotechnology Leadership Depends on Stable Funding

For our members and for patients waiting on new therapies, stable, secure NIH funding is not optional; it is paramount in efforts to ensure faster discoveries and more cures. Uncertainty around NIH funding, award timing, or policy shifts slows the research pipeline: labs halt research, institutions pause hiring and procurement, collaborations stall, and promising findings take longer to become diagnostics, preventive interventions, and treatments.

As the Committee considers what modernization should mean in practice, MassBio is especially concerned about the downstream consequences of the recent shift toward multi-year funding commitments. Multiple analyses indicate that recent policy-driven shifts toward multi-year awards have coincided with a substantial decline in the number of new and competing awards NIH can make in a given fiscal year.² We have concerns that this redirection of funds without commensurate funding increases will lead to scientifically strong proposals going unfunded simply because fewer new awards “fit” into the year’s budget. If the goal is faster discoveries and more cures, then modernization should expand rather than compress our capacity to fund new ideas, new investigators, and new approaches. Policies that reduce the number of new awards in-year risk slowing the very engine the Committee is seeking to strengthen.

Finally, MassBio is concerned that continued instability and fewer new awards will erode U.S. competitiveness in the biosciences. The United States’ global leadership has been built on a model that backs the best science, funds it reliably, and enables translation through partnerships and private investment. Funding instability and risks threaten this foundation at a time when strategic competitors, notably China, are working deliberately to expand their biotechnology capabilities and position. In a global race for biomedical leadership, unpredictability is a self-inflicted wound.

MassBio once again thanks you for recognizing the vital role NIH plays in the biotech ecosystem. As Congress considers policies to effectively modernize NIH, we urge you to ensure NIH funding remains strong, stable, and driven by scientific excellence. Keeping NIH rooted in merit-based science is essential to sustaining discovery, accelerating cures, and ensuring America remains the world’s leading destination for biomedical innovation.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to share MassBio’s views. We look forward to working with the Committee to advance policies that strengthen NIH and accelerate the delivery of lifesaving treatments.

Sincerely,



Kendalle Burlin O’Connell
CEO & President
Massachusetts Biotechnology Council (MassBio)

² NIH Grants Policy Under the Second Trump Administration; <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF13131>