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August 2, 2024

The Honorable Diana DeGette
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Larry Buschon, M.D.
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Via email: cures.rfi@mail.house.gov

Dear Ranking Member DeGette and Vice Chair Buschon,

Thank you for requesting feedback on “fully realizing the goals of the 21st Century Cures Act and Cures 2.0.”

Boston University (BU) appreciates the impact that 21st Century Cures had on the biomedical research enterprise, including its important investment in neuroscience and other high-impact research. We also welcomed the goals of Cures 2.0, particularly the creation of a new agency to fund high-risk, high-reward health research and a call to bolster the nation’s biomedical preparedness and response infrastructure.

BU is a key partner with federal health care agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), and the White House Office of Pandemic Preparedness and Response. We proudly operate the [National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories](#) (NEIDL), one of only two NIH-funded National Biocontainment Laboratories (NBL’s) located at a university. This Biosafety Level 4 (BSL–4) lab is a tremendous national biopreparedness resource. In addition, the [Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases](#) at BU works with health stakeholders to improve societal resilience to emerging infectious diseases through health and policy research, capacity-building, and training. We are also home to [CARB-X](#), the BARDA-funded global partnership which accelerates the early development pipeline of new antibiotics, vaccines, and rapid diagnostics to address drug-resistant bacteria.

As you build upon the success of the 21st Century Cures initiatives, we offer two recommendations.

Sustained funding for vital research. The 21st Century Cures law spurred unprecedented advancements in neuroscience research with its considerable funding for the NIH. Cures showed what was possible when policymakers make bold investments in the future of science. At BU, we have seen the field of neurophotonics – using light-based technologies to understand the brain and improve its function – take off due in part to the Brain Research Through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative. However, that progress is threatened as BRAIN Initiative funding reaches its planned end. In future Cures legislation, we urge you to keep NIH funding sustained and predictable over the long-term to maximize the advances on the horizon in neuroscience and other fields.

Invest in national infrastructure for biopreparedness. The NIH funds two National Biocontainment Labs as part of a broader national network of secure facilities that study emerging infectious diseases. The BU NEIDL and the University of Texas Medical Branch Galveston National Laboratory (GNL) are a unique national resource in advancing public health and combating emerging biological threats in a safe and secure research environment. These NBL’s serve a critical role in developing diagnostics, vaccines, and treatments for emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases. Unfortunately, while the urgent need for growing biocontainment capacity has grown and the costs of operating the NBL’s have steadily risen, federal support from the NIH has not kept pace.

The United States has invested wisely in national resources like the NEIDL and GNL and needs to bolster and sustain these invaluable research facilities to ensure our country’s biodefense. We urge you to

consider dedicated funding for the NBL's to support (1) research on biodefense, emerging infectious disease agents, and other infectious disease threats to global health; (2) training new researchers, including in biosafety level 4 practices; (3) maintaining a workforce skilled in BSL-3 and BSL-4 research; and (4) establishing best practices for the safe, effective, and efficient conduct of research in BSL-3 and BSL-4 facilities.

Thank you for considering our feedback. I hope you will reach out to me or to Jennifer Grodsky with BU Federal Relations (grodsky@bu.edu; 202-393-7272) if we can be helpful to your work to advance Cures legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Bifano', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas Bifano
Vice President and Associate Provost *ad interim* for Research