05.08.07 - Governor Announces Life Sciences Initiative

Governor Deval L. Patrick

Life Sciences Initiative Announcement

May 8, 2007

As Delivered

Senate President Murray reiterated her long commitment to support stem cell research on the very day she assumed her new role as President of the Senate. And under Speaker DiMasi's leadership Massachusetts passed one of the most important pieces of Life Sciences legislation in the nation just two years ago. Today we will build upon that foundation.

I'm delighted also to be joined by my friends and partners in today's initiative, Dr Peter Slavin, CEO of Massachusetts General Hospital, Jack Wilson, president of the University of Massachusetts, Josh Boger, CEO of Vertex in Cambridge and chairman elect of BIO, and Jonathan Kraft of the Kraft group.

These gentleman represent others among the teaching hospitals and research universities and biotech companies and business community generally, whose willingness to care about and in their own ways invest in science and healing has been key in our success to date and will be key to our leadership tomorrow. And I also want to welcome former senate president Robert Travaglini. Where are you Trav?

His vision helped to position this commonwealth to assume global leadership in the life sciences, and that is a profound legacy to have left this generation and the next.

This is an important time for the life sciences all over the world. Its ideas and innovations can change lives, and can generate billions of dollars in new products, good jobs at good wages, and robust sustainable economic growth.

This industry capitalizes on the best that Massachusetts has to offer, and serves the best of what Massachusetts is about. Within this small state we have a extraordinary confluence of research universities, teaching hospitals, brain power, venture capital, and a long tradition of entrepreneurialism that has helped defined this economy as being fueled by innovation. We are quite simply the largest life sciences super-cluster on the planet, and that is a thing to be very proud of.

And that concentration of expertise and talent annually brings home a disproportionate share, over $2 billion dollars a year of funding from the national institute of health. That is why we have made your work

central to our economic vision for this commonwealth. That confluence of strength is the foundation of our economy for tomorrow. One out of every seven jobs in the Massachusetts economy is in the life sciences cluster. Companies were started in Massachusetts by graduates of our universities, researchers in our research hospitals and academic medical centers go on to create breakthrough cures, but thousands of jobs. Storied companies like Genzyme, Biogen, Vertex and now, Bristol Myers Squibb, start here or move here because of the unique combinations of strengths here in this Commonwealth.

Dr. Craig Mello who has joined us here I am very proud to have by my side and is one excellent example of the work and the strength of the talent here in Massachusetts. He and his team at UMASS Medical School in Worcester just brought home a Nobel prize for their work on RNAi, a gene silencing technique that holds the promise against diabetes cancer and HIV AIDS, we are very proud of you doctor, and your team and of your work.

But the point is also this, Dr. Mello is a part of a community of tens of thousands of people working to advance the life sciences industry and the future of healing and that is a point worth emphasizing. For us, the success of the biotech industry is more than a commercial matter. Each family can speak about a mother or father who suffered from Lupus or Cancer or some other disease. All of us have known relatives and friends who live with debilitating illnesses like Alzheimer's and diabetes. Every day we meet people with spinal injuries or HIV/AIDS whose families are looking for a reason to hope. You cannot be in the company of someone you love, powerless to help them, without appreciating the vital importance of stem cell research and other biomedical breakthroughs. In many ways, the health of this industry and the health of our society are closely linked. That is why we will not rest on our laurels. Right now our competitor states and foreign nations are investing billions of dollars to attract researchers, institutions and industries. At the same time, federal funding through the National Institutes of Health, of which Massachusetts has received a disproportionate share, is flat and likely to diminish in the short term. Politics, especially around stem cell research, impairs the innovation and calculated risk-taking that make breakthroughs possible. It is essential now that the Commonwealth step up to maintain and extend our global leadership in the life sciences. That is why I am proud to announce today the Massachusetts Life Science Initiative, a 10 year - $1billion dollar investment that will create new partnerships between state government, industry, academic medical centers and public and private higher education, and accelerate our statewide life sciences growth into high gear. We want Massachusetts to provide the global platform for bringing your innovations from the drawing board to the market, from inspiration to commercialization, and from ideas to cures. We know that begins with new ideas and innovation. Our rate of innovation in recent years has been triple that of the national average and I have no intention of letting it slip. We will close the funding gaps left by depleted NIH support with grants to sustain existing research and support new explorations. This funding for promising research in areas such as stem cells and on RNAi will allow us to build on our existing strengths and bypass the impact of national politics. To increase our intellectual capital, we will offer Massachusetts Life Science Fellowship Grants to young, emerging talent. We

recognize the value of attracting and retaining the best and brightest minds to our life sciences sector, and want to help them and you build careers here in Massachusetts. It is these young talented men and women who go on to start the next Genzyme and the next Biogen and the next vertex, and create thousands of new jobs in our communities. Our next step is the creation of an Innovation Infrastructure, one that provides the necessary support for life sciences research and development. Playing to our world leadership in stem cell research, we will create the Massachusetts Stem Cell Bank. This is unique endeavor, to be hosted at the University of Massachusetts, will be the world's largest catalog of stem cell lines widely available to researchers, and cut through the administrative tasks associated with storing, handling, and shipping stem cell lines. Beth Israel Deaconess, Brigham & Women's, Children's Hospital, Harvard, MGH, MIT, Partners HealthCare and UMass have already agreed to donate their stem cell lines to the Stem Cell Bank - keeping with and emphasizing the spirit of collaboration that has characterized our work here in Massachusetts and will be our secret weapon going forward. Researchers all over the world will have access stem cell lines that are truly made in Massachusetts. Together we are dedicated to making Massachusetts the foremost capitol of stem cell research on the planet.

In that same spirit, the state will invest in Innovation Centers to provide industry and the academic community access to cutting-edge facilities and technology. By creating central locations for resources and research, we can enhance technology transfer, cut development time, and improve our workforce deployment. These centers will serve as regional economic hubs throughout the entire Commonwealth, spawning new companies and new jobs in the cities and towns around them.

We will also partner with the private sector to purchase equipment and instruments for those innovation centers and for private facilities, right now, equipment worth millions of dollars sits idle in our own labs in Massachusetts because the federal government has prohibited its use on stem cell research. This must end, and it will end here in Massachusetts.

Life sciences in this commonwealth will be defined by innovation and cures, not ideology and short term political gain. Finally, when an idea is ready to become reality, we will make targeted investments to guide it to the marketplace. I know that all too often, breakthroughs fall into the so-called "valley of death," the investment gap between early stages of academic research and industry development. We will provide grants to translate Massachusetts discoveries into real health applications, support partnerships to move new ideas towards market supported development, and fund efforts to create new tools like stem cell lines to be made available at low cost.

We will also develop support programs for improved outreach, grant matching, and loans for life science projects qualifying for federal SBIR/STTR programs. Today, Massachusetts companies lead the nation in per capita awards under these programs. We will build on that existing creativity and entrepreneurship. Every new direct job created in the life sciences brings with it two additional jobs in support services for

suppliers, vendors, and construction and we want to pay attention to that fact.

In addition, we will develop a tax incentive program for life science companies that directly rewards job creation in Massachusetts. My administration will compete for every single job available, every single one. Using our sales team, we will aggressively seek to recruit emerging ones.

And that job creation strategy is not complete without extensive workforce training. We will focus on training that meets the skills employers are asking for. I want to make sure that the Commonwealth partners with you, your employees and with higher education to make sure that we close the skills gap and spread opportunity to all regions of this great state.

This is the vision we have for the life sciences in Massachusetts. I thank all of you for coming here at a time of great opportunity, but also of great urgency for your industry and for society. In past years the work of our academic community, and groups like the Massachusetts Life Science Collaborative have helped move this industry to a place of world leadership. But sustaining that leadership requires a bold new approach. State government now has the opportunity to be an active partner in meeting that challenge. In Massachusetts, we intend to seize it.

I look forward to working with all of you.