

Biotech Group Pushes Back On Marketing Regs

By Paula C. Newton

Special to the Worcester Business Journal

January 5, 2009

Last year proved to be another promising year for the life sciences industry in New England, and the creation of a new, member-driven regional organization will make 2009 even more promising.

The New England Biotech Association (NEBA) is comprised of state biotech associations, companies, academic institutions, and other organizations with a mission to support and grow the biotechnology industry throughout the six New England states. NEBA serves as a regional policy and public affairs voice for the biotechnology industry, committed to ensuring that we remain a global leader.



Regional Perspective

With 600 members from all six states, in 2009 NEBA plans to: educate policy makers and the media about the biotech industry; promote public policies that foster innovation; encourage economic development in the biotech sector; and advocate continued patient access to life-saving and life-improving breakthrough medicines.

The members that created NEBA saw a void that needed to be filled. The state biotech trade associations do a great job but must focus on their individual states. Given the interconnectedness and geographic proximity of the New England states, it makes sense to have an organization that examines how good and bad public policies from the entire region impact the industry.

It's certainly the case that a biotech company in Worcester or Cambridge will spin off a facility or an affiliate in New Hampshire or Rhode Island or vice-versa. That's why we

need a regional approach, so that the climate fosters regional spin-offs — not spin-offs to North Carolina or California or somewhere else.

One major policy issue NEBA is currently fighting against is implementation of a burdensome marketing code being pursued by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that could negatively impact the biotech sector in Massachusetts and New England.

In fact, the Department of Public Health will be holding a public hearing on it Jan. 12 at UMass Medical School in Worcester. The Massachusetts Biotechnology Council (MBC) will be present to fight back as it is leading the opposition to these potentially job-killing new regulations, and NEBA will follow the MBC's lead and have our members voice their opinion that the restrictions will hurt the biopharmaceutical and medical device industries rather than fostering them.

Policies adopted here have a ripple effect throughout New England, and subjecting biotech to regulations far exceeding those for other private businesses is a terrible idea for a state that wants to remain a national hub for biotech and medical innovation and the high-quality jobs they bring.

This is a NEBA priority for 2009, but we also continue to monitor other policy proposals in the six states to ensure that the voice of the life sciences industry is appropriately heard.

Because our members include the largest biotech associations in those states — the Biotech Association of Maine, Connecticut United for Research Excellence (CURE), New Hampshire Bio/Medical Council, Rhode Island BioGroup, Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, Massachusetts High Technology Council, and the Biotech Association of Vermont — plus leading patient organizations like the Arthritis Foundation of Northern & Southern New England, we have a great team assembled to make sure that life-saving therapies and innovation continue throughout New England.

Paula Newton is Chair of the New England Biotech Association and President of the New Hampshire Bio/Medical Council. To find out more about NEBA, visit www.newenglandbiotech.org.