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May 4, 2015

Representative Kate Hogan
Chair, Committee on Public Health
Massachusetts State House, Room 130
Boston, MA 02133

RE: H. 1945 – An Act Promoting Research and Protecting Public Safety and the Environment

Dear Chair Hogan:

On behalf of the Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals (COBTH) I would like to offer comments on H1945 – *An Act Promoting Research and Protecting Public Safety and the Environment*. By way of background, COBTH is an organization of fourteen Boston area hospitals that work together on issues common to their missions as academic medical centers – including research, medical education and community service.

On behalf of our member organizations we join the sponsors of H 1945 in their desire to ensure that medical research is conducted in a safe manner. However we believe that sufficient safeguards already exist and that statewide legislation is not necessary and could send a chilling message to life science companies considering locating in the Commonwealth, and therefore **oppose H 1945**.

COBTH's member hospitals worked closely with the Boston Public Health Commission to first develop, and now implement, comprehensive laboratory regulations. Working with the Public Health Commission, we believe that the approach taken in Boston is practical, enforceable and recognizes the balance that should exist between regulation and reporting and allowing vital medical research to continue and grow.

Elements of the Boston regulations include:

- A requirement that all level 3 and 4 labs and some level 2 labs receive a permit from the Public Health Commission
- A review and approval process that includes submission, review and approval of all protocols, procedures and policies related to lab safety including training, security, inspections, waste disposal
- Establishment of an institutional biosafety committee with community representation and regular reporting to the Public Health Commission
- Mandatory reporting of any incidents that may pose a threat to the public safety and
- Physical inspection of laboratories and severe penalties for noncompliance

These regulations and subsequent guidelines for implementation and enforcement are the product of many hours of work on the part of research institutions in the city and the Public Health Commission.

Adoption of a state law that in many instances overlaps with the Boston regulations would create another layer of regulation and oversight that would undo much of the hard work accomplished by these research institutions and the city over the past five years.

COBTH recently completed a report on the economic impact of our member hospitals on the city, state and region. This report measured both the direct and indirect impact that these institutions have on employment and the economy in Boston and the state. Directly employing more than 72,000 full time workers and contributing more than \$13b to the state's economy the findings of the report reinforced that the academic medical centers anchor the entire life sciences industry in Massachusetts. It is no accident that so many medical device companies, pharmaceutical companies and biotech firms locate in Massachusetts – they want to be close to institutions that attract more than a billion dollars in federal research funding and where the cutting edge research is being conducted. Other cities states and nations are trying to replicate the Commonwealth's leadership position in biomedical research. Their efforts include special zoning, streamlined permitting and favorable regulatory policies. As other cities and states try to replicate what we have here in Massachusetts, we need to make sure that we take a balanced approach to regulation of medical research.

We therefore oppose passage of H 1945 and ask that individual cities and towns that seek to regulate laboratories look to the City of Boston as a model for a balance regulatory approach.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Erwin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Erwin
Executive Director