

EDITOR'S NOTE: Sen. Cardin writes periodic columns for Maryland publications. The following column about the strong growth in the biotech industry in Maryland may be of interest to your readers. Please contact Susan Sullam at susan_sullam@cardin.senate.gov if you have any questions.

PRECEDENCE: Senator Cardin is a member of five committees: Small Business and Entrepreneurship, Foreign Relations, Judiciary, Environment and Public Works, and Budget. His web site is: cardin.senate.gov

BIOTECH RESEARCH AND SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT HELP DRIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN MARYLAND

By U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin

Maryland can take great pride in the fact that the biotechnology industry has become one of our state's premier industries. Today, Maryland ranks 19th in population, but third in the number of biotechnology firms and related biotech employment, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce.

That gives Maryland an enormous advantage. The economy of the 21st Century will be driven by advances in the biotechnology industry. From life-saving vaccines to medical advances, Maryland stands at the forefront of economic growth tied to this industry.

It's easy to understand why Maryland has become a magnet for biotechnology research and development. We have 55 universities and colleges in our state, and some -- such as Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland -- are considered among our nation's top research universities. Maryland currently is ranked third in the nation in federal research and development funding for universities and colleges. We also are home to the National Institutes of Health, many other federal agencies, and numerous small and mid-size biotechnology firms in the Washington-Baltimore area that are able to secure important federal resources.

As a member of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, I am dedicated to the reauthorization of the Small Business and Innovation Research (SBIR), and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs. The SBIR was created in 1982 by Congress and the STTR in 1992, and both programs have helped to generate more than 84,000 patents and millions of jobs. To strengthen these programs, the Small Business Committee recently voted to allow greater participation by majority-owned venture capital firms to stimulate greater research and development.

SBIR programs are paying off. I recently visited two Maryland companies that are leading the nation in bio-research. BioFactura, Inc. of Rockville has been awarded \$1 million by the Department of Defense to expand and accelerate the Smallpox Biodefense Therapeutic program. Working with the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, BioFactura is developing the next generation of treatment for the adverse effects of the smallpox vaccine.

I also visited Neuralstem, Inc. in Montgomery County, which received a SBIR grant to develop a drug for depression. Neuralstem also is involved in [neural](#) stem cell research to develop a treatment for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), a progressive neurodegenerative disease. It is important that our nation provide funding to make sure companies like Neuralstem can continue research that could benefit millions of people.

Maryland has become a leader in biotechnology research and development because we have a strong partnership among private industry, educational institutions, and government. The federal government has an important role in investing in our nation's future, and that includes ensuring that the United States remains at the forefront of new discoveries that will benefit mankind.

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