

LAMAR ALEXANDER, TENNESSEE, CHAIRMAN

MICHAEL B. ENZI, WYOMING
RICHARD BURR, NORTH CAROLINA
JOHNNY ISAKSON, GEORGIA
RAND PAUL, KENTUCKY
SUSAN M. COLLINS, MAINE
BILL CASSIDY, M.D., LOUISIANA
TODD YOUNG, INDIANA
ORRIN HATCH, UTAH
PAT ROBERTS, KANSAS
LISA MURKOWSKI, ALASKA
TIM SCOTT, SOUTH CAROLINA

PATTY MURRAY, WASHINGTON
BERNARD SANDERS (I), VERMONT
ROBERT P. CASEY, JR., PENNSYLVANIA
MICHAEL F. BENNET, COLORADO
TAMMY BALDWIN, WISCONSIN
CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY, CONNECTICUT
ELIZABETH WARREN, MASSACHUSETTS
TIM Kaine, VIRGINIA
MARGARET WOOD HASSAN, NEW HAMPSHIRE
TINA SMITH, MINNESOTA
DOUG JONES, ALABAMA

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

DAVID P. CLEARY, STAFF DIRECTOR
EVAN SCHATZ, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

<http://help.senate.gov>

June 28, 2018

James C. Greenwood
President and Chief Executive Officer
Biotechnology Innovation Organization
1201 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Mr. Greenwood:

I write to you as head of the Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO) with deep concern regarding harassment in the workplace, particularly in light of the recent event sponsored by your member companies associated with the BIO International Convention, that have called into question the role that BIO plays in fostering industry antidiscrimination and harassment standards. Over the past year, stories of sexual harassment across all places of work have dominated national headlines and sparked a conversation about power dynamics, equality, and change in the workplace and beyond. Workers across the country are speaking out about their experiences, and their stories have made clear that we all have a great deal of work to do to address this pervasive, systemic, and longstanding issue. I hope and expect that in your position as the leader of the industry's trade group, you are taking steps to address concerns about misconduct among member companies and to ensure that your members' workplaces are free from harassment.

I am particularly concerned about events that took place earlier this month at BIO's International Convention. It was my understanding that BIO was undertaking efforts to ensure greater participation of women in the conference and entirely prevent all-male panels this year thanks to increased BIO attention to issues of inclusion. However, the convention featured 25 panels without a single female speaker, and men accounted for roughly 70 percent of the speakers and panelists at the convention.¹ The lack of female representation at the conference, even in light of panels specially geared toward women and their advancement, is disappointing and speaks to the larger issues of diversity and equal opportunity for advancement in the biotech industry.

¹ <https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2018/05/31/biotech-biggest-showcase-lineup-light-female-speakers/ZfvNa9GgBF5OvIQLKhe3jO/story.html>

Additionally, the well-known and highest rated “must-attend” party associated with the convention, but not sponsored by BIO,^{2,3} featured topless female dancers painted with the logos of party sponsors, including BIO member company Selexis.⁴ This event has a highly concerning history of objectifying women and using culturally inappropriate themes, over the course of its multiple-year tenure associated with your convention and sponsored by your member companies. Though some party organizers defended the dancers as “artsy and edgy,”⁵ the bottom line is that objectifying women and exploiting cultural traditions for the purposes of entertaining industry members devalues diversity and inclusion.

After the party, you and your Board Chairman,⁶ as well as other industry leaders^{7,8} spoke out against the event; however, I’m not aware of anything your organization and these industry leaders have done to ensure there are real consequences for sponsoring companies, nor used your leadership roles to address the broader workplace challenges in the biotechnology industry.

Over the past few years, industry leaders and companies have been called on to account for their actions and committed to doing so but little real progress appears to have been made.⁹ I understand that BIO formed a diversity and inclusion council last year that released a set of principles on “workforce development, diversity, and inclusion (WDDI) for the biotechnology industry.”¹⁰ However, the council has yet to release industry standards for creating safe and equal workplaces.

Efforts to create such standards must especially consider some of biotech’s most vulnerable workers: medical researchers. Unacceptably, one in three female biomedical researchers report sexual harassment.¹¹ Harassers often can be close supervisors who have the power to help or hurt a young scientist’s ability to establish themselves in the research field. As a result, these professional costs make it incredibly difficult for individuals to report harassment in research settings. It is past time for biotech to be a leader and to consider ways to rid all of its workplaces—from the corporate offices to academic medical laboratories—from harassment and discrimination.

As the Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Committee with jurisdiction over issues of workplace harassment, I am extremely concerned about this issue. Actions taken with the goal of achieving greater gender balance in the biotech industry, from encouraging young girls to

²<https://www.facebook.com/pabnabevent/photos/a.523700737769307.1073741828.523680027771378/526500097489371/?type=3&theater>

http://archive.boston.com/business/technology/innoeco/2012/06/the_bio_party_list_which_event.html

³ http://archive.boston.com/business/technology/innoeco/2012/06/the_bio_party_list_which_event.html

⁴ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-13/after-biotech-party-features-topless-dancers-firms-pull-support>

⁵ <http://fortune.com/2018/06/14/biotech-conference-party-topless-dancers/>

⁶ <https://www.statnews.com/2018/06/12/topless-dancers-bio-convention-pabnab/>

⁷ <https://www.massbio.org/news/recent-news/massbio-statement-on-the-party-at-bio-not-associated-with-bio-pabnab-decision-to-feature-topless-dancers-143394>

⁸ <https://www.biospace.com/article/another-biotech-conference-another-party-involving-half-naked-women-covered-in-corporate-logos/>

⁹ <https://www.wgbh.org/news/local-news/2018/06/14/woman-calls-out-boston-biotech-party-for-topless-dancers>

¹⁰ <https://www.bio.org/diversity>

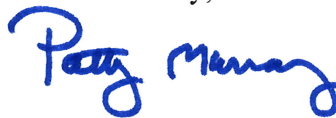
¹¹ <https://www.statnews.com/2016/05/17/sexual-harassment-female-researchers/>

participate in STEM education to efforts like the WDDI standards, should not be undercut by issues of harassment and culture. Over the past few months, I have asked industry associations for an update on efforts to prevent and address harassment in workplaces across the country. As part of that effort, I am interested in the ongoing discussions, plans, and actions within BIO aimed at protecting employees and establishing an equal and harassment-free workplace. While we understand that BIO does not control its member companies, your trade organization represents members' interests, and their actions impact your reputation and reflect on the industry as a whole. I request a briefing with my staff within the next three weeks to discuss recent efforts you have undertaken to assess and address workplace harassment in your industry. I also request the following information:

1. Any polling, surveys, or research BIO has conducted in order to understand the scope of the problem within the industry;
2. Any research or actions BIO has undertaken to assess and address risk factors specific to the industry;
3. Any surveys BIO has conducted to solicit feedback from employees about how to best address harassment in the industry and the results of the surveys;
4. Any steps BIO has taken to ensure its associated employers are fully and properly educating their employees about workplace harassment policies and rights;
5. Any best practices the BIO has identified among its associated employers to accurately assess and address workplace harassment; and
6. Any suggestions you may have about how to strengthen and improve legal protections and processes in the workplace.

Studies have shown that workplaces that tolerate harassment have more of it, while workplaces that intentionally act to address issues of harassment have less. Employers and employees in your industry are undoubtedly looking to you for leadership in how to tackle this persistent problem with the urgency it requires. I appreciate you taking this matter seriously, and I look forward to our continued discussions. If you have any questions regarding this letter please contact Carly Rush or Laura Aguilar at 202-224-0767 with my Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Staff.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

cc: Lamar Alexander, United States Senator,
Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

cc: John Maraganore, CEO, Alnylam Pharmaceuticals, Inc., BIO Board Chair