



March 2, 2021

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
328 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Scott
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
328 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable G.T. Thompson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1010 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Boozman, and Ranking Member Thompson:

The Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO) applauds the introduction of the *Emergency Relief for Farmers of Color Act* and welcomes the inclusion of provisions from this legislation in the *American Rescue Plan*.

BIO represents over 1,000 members in a biotech ecosystem with a central mission – to advance public policy to improve the lives of people and the health of the planet through science and innovation in the agriculture, energy, manufacturing, and health sectors. BIO is committed to speaking up for the millions of families around the globe who depend upon our success. We will drive a revolution that aims to cure patients, protect our climate, and nourish humanity.

Over the past year, COVID-19 has exposed the vulnerabilities and inequalities in how communities are disproportionately impacted, our capacity to respond to crisis, and our ability to withstand an economic downturn. In response to this, BIO launched its BIOEquality Agenda¹ last summer, which aims to attack the systemic inequality, injustice, and unfair treatment of communities of color through the positive force of biotechnology. This agenda seeks to support stronger and healthier communities by promoting health equity; invest in the current and next generation of scientists; and expand opportunity for underrepresented populations.

The agricultural innovations that BIO's member companies are developing will allow producers to sustainably provide the food, feed, fuel, and fiber needed for a growing world. New technologies can tackle hunger and malnutrition by addressing the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables in food deserts found throughout urban and

¹ <https://www.bio.org/bioequality-agenda>

rural communities, by extending the shelf life of produce and cutting down on food waste. The development and deployment of these technologies will be crucial to helping farmers and ranchers be a part of the solution to climate change and provide them with the tools to be self-sustaining and resilient to a volatile climate.

However, to be successful in confronting these challenges, we must foster an innovation ecosystem that unleashes the transformative potential of science and take steps to ensure the gains from these cutting edge technologies are broadly shared for the benefit of humanity. Advancing legislation that provides economic relief to socially disadvantaged farmers and supports Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other institutions of higher education that serve communities of color is a positive step towards that goal.

BIO is committed to championing broad access to biotech breakthroughs and scientific equality and welcomes the opportunity to work with Congress and the Administration to meet the challenges of inequity head on.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MMH', written in a cursive style.

Michelle McMurry-Heath
President and CEO
Biotechnology Innovation Organization

Cc:

The Honorable Raphael Warnock
The Honorable Cory Booker
The Honorable Ben Ray Luján
The Honorable Patrick Leahy
The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
The Honorable Tom Vilsack