

National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology

November 30, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin:

As a critical emerging technology, biotechnology can help ensure US economic and national security by strengthening our domestic manufacturing abilities. Biomanufacturing provides new opportunities to create jobs, onshore supply chains, and create novel products for our military. The Department of Defense (DoD) is uniquely positioned to support the growth of US biomanufacturing capabilities and secure our competitive leadership in biotechnology. As members of the National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology, we urge you to prioritize funding for biotechnology within the Defense Production Act (DPA) account for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024.

The Commission is supportive of DoD's proposed budget for biomanufacturing investments through DPA for FY24. If appropriated, these funds would support emerging biotechnology investments that will address vulnerabilities in critical supply chains. This significant investment in US biomanufacturing comes at an opportune time for securing our economic and technological competitiveness, and for taking advantage of the convergence of other emerging technology fields. International competitors, such as the People's Republic of China, are increasingly encroaching on our leadership in the industry through considerable investments in their own biotechnology research, development, and production.

We understand the FY24 funding levels being considered by the Congressional Appropriations Committees for the DPA Purchases account, while notably higher than the FY23 enacted level, are not to the full level of the FY24 President's Budget request for this account. In any scenario, DoD will have both unobligated funds from prior fiscal years and some FY24 funding to invest in biomanufacturing. It would be a mistake for the Department to deprioritize biotechnology relative to other uses of DPA funds, regardless of the final enacted level for FY24. We urge you to maintain plans to prioritize DPA funding for biomanufacturing in FY24.

In 2022, DoD announced plans to invest \$1 billion over five years into the domestic biomanufacturing infrastructure. These goals are consistent with our nation's policies across administrations in harnessing the potential of biotechnology. Innovations in biomanufacturing can address various DoD capability gaps and supply chain vulnerabilities while creating jobs domestically. We ask that DoD adhere to its long-term investments into domestic biomanufacturing capabilities to meet national defense needs by prioritizing funding for biotechnology in FY24.

Moreover, this investment in biomanufacturing comes at a critical time; this funding combined with advancements in other emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and robotics, create an environment conducive to supporting an accelerated pace of innovation and biomanufacturing. We also face threats to our supply chain, and the funding line for biomanufacturing is for the explicit purpose of scaling “emerging biotechnology for critical materials and precursors.” It is critical for our economic and national security that we harness this unique time and grasp the potential of emerging biotechnology.

Given these concerns, we urge the Department to prioritize biotechnology investments. These investments in biotechnology are critical to scaling US biomanufacturing infrastructure, securing critical supply chains, meeting DoD capability gaps, and maintaining our competitive leadership in the industry. Thank you for your consideration of our views, and we look forward to working with you on this important issue.



Dr. Jason Kelly, Chair



Dr. Michelle Rozo, Vice-Chair



Sen. Alex Padilla, Commissioner



Sen. Todd Young, Commissioner



Rep. Stephanie Bice, Commissioner



Rep. Ro Khanna, Commissioner



Paul Arcangeli, Commissioner



Dr. Angela Belcher, Commissioner



Dawn Meyerriecks, Commissioner



Dr. Eric Schmidt, Commissioner



Dr. Alexander Titus, Commissioner



Dr. Dov Zakheim, Commissioner

Identical Letter Sent to:

Honorable Michael J. McCord
Honorable Dr. William A. LaPlante
Honorable Heidi Shyu