

June 21, 2010

The Honorable Gloria Negrete McLeod
Chair, Senate Business, Professions, and Economic Development Committee
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 2059
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 549 – SUPPORT AS AMENDED JUNE 17, 2010

Dear Senator Negrete McLeod:

On behalf of the California Healthcare Institute (CHI), the statewide public policy association representing our innovative life sciences sector -- biotechnology, pharmaceutical, medical device and diagnostics companies, venture capital firms, research universities and institutes and its 275,000 workers – I am writing to support AB 549, a bill that would modify licensure requirements for clinical laboratory scientists in California so that clinical labs may more easily recruit and retain Ph.D level personnel to work in high complexity genetics laboratories.

Under existing law, California has licensure requirements for clinical lab directors that oversee cytogenetic, molecular genetic, and histocompatibility laboratories that exceed the American Board of Medical Genetics (ABMG) and the American Society of Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics (ASHI) guidelines. California's requirements also exceed established federal guidelines under the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Act as well as the licensure requirements in place in most other states. While these stringent requirements are intended to encourage scientists to seek advanced degrees and aim at improving clinical laboratory safety, they unfortunately result in discouraging prospective laboratory directors from seeking licensure and employment in California.

This legislation is designed to overcome some of the regulatory roadblocks that laboratory directors face in California. AB 549 would allow individuals credentialed by the American Board of Medical Genetics and the American Board of Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics to obtain the appropriate license that matches their level of education and skills so that they can serve as laboratory directors in the state, and provide appropriate oversight of genetic testing conducted in California.

Our member companies are on the forefront of scientific research and innovation. California is a leader in biomedical research, leading the field in the race for treatments for myriad chronic diseases such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, and diabetes. The life sciences industry in California must be able to attract talent to fill clinical laboratory director positions from a very limited pool of qualified applicants. California's licensure requirements impose an undue burden on qualified scientists who must work in remedial positions before they can work at the level merited by their training and experience.

We strongly support AB 549 so that California's licensure requirements for clinical laboratory scientists make our state competitive in the market for talented research scientists. We are confident that AB 549 will facilitate scientific research in California and help our life sciences companies attract and retain the best scientists in the biomedical field. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra Pizarro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Sandra Pizarro
Vice President – State Government Affairs

cc: The Honorable Warren Furutani
Chair & Members, Senate Business and Professions Committee
Senate Republican Caucus