



BUSINESS

Pols push \$1B biotech bill ; Measure heading to final votes

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The Legislature's economic development committee put the finishing touches on the \$1 billion life sciences bill late yesterday.

The action comes just days before state political and life science industry leaders travel to California for a major biotechnology conference. The House is expected to approve the measure today, the Senate tomorrow.

"There's a lot in this bill for everybody to like," said Rep. Daniel E. Bosley (D-North Adams) and Sen. Jack Hart (D-Boston), the chairmen of the committee.

Gov. Deval Patrick first pitched the life sciences legislation last May at the 2007 BIO International Convention in Boston. He wants to have the bill signed before going to this year's biotech convention, which starts Tuesday in San Diego.

Patrick spokesman Kyle Sullivan said the governor was still reviewing the bill, "but at first blush it seems very consistent with the governor's vision of making Massachusetts a world leader in the life sciences field, and it will allow us to create jobs and grow ideas into products to create cures."

Sullivan also said the Legislature has been "collaborative and cooperative" when working with the administration on the proposal.

Bosley said the Legislature's version of the package, unveiled in April, takes a targeted approach to growing high-paying jobs, drawing biotech companies to Massachusetts, and retaining talented scientists and researchers at state institutions.

The 10-year initiative includes \$250 million in tax credits for life sciences companies that promise to create jobs in Massachusetts, and \$250 million for research grants.

The bill also includes \$500 million in capital investments for industry-related construction and improvement projects, and \$25 million a year for 10 years for industry-related grants and programs.

The Massachusetts Life Sciences Center is expected to allocate that money. The center's board recently picked its first president, Susan Windham-Bannister.

She doesn't begin her job until July 15 but she will accompany Patrick, Senate President Therese Murray and House Speaker Sal DiMasi to next week's BIO event.

Patrick is scheduled to join former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush on Tuesday in a keynote discussion about government's role in biotech research.