



The Roxbury Safety Net Coalition & STOP the BU Bioterror Lab Coalition

MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release

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Roxbury/South End Residents & Experts to Urge Boston City Councilors to Pass Ordinance Banning Biosafety Level 4 Pathogens from Boston

Boston City Council Committee on Government Operations, chaired by Councilors Michael Flaherty & Tito Jackson, to conduct **April 16** hearing on Docket #0227, An Ordinance Regarding the Prohibition of Research Designated as Biosafety Level 4, Sponsored by Councilors Charles Yancey, Tito Jackson & Ayanna Pressley

Community residents, scientific experts and civic advocates to testify. Culmination of twelve years of efforts to block importation of world's deadliest pathogens into a community already severely impacted by environmental hazards and health risks.

When: Wednesday, April 16, 2014 at 4:00 p.m.

Where: Boston City Hall, Council Chamber, Fifth Floor

This is a culminating event in the long struggle to make sure that Biosafety Level 4 research will never be done in Boston. The Center for Disease Control defines Biosafety Level 4 containment as **"required for work with dangerous and exotic agents that pose a high individual risk of aerosol-transmitted laboratory infections and life-threatening disease that is frequently fatal, and for which there are no vaccines or treatments."** Disease-causing organisms used in BSL4 laboratories include viruses such as Ebola, Marburg, Lassa and Hemorrhagic Fever.

Boston University's BSL4 laboratory, like those established in the immediate years following the 2001 anthrax scare, has a biodefense, not a public health, mission. Government concern with bioterrorism led to excessive funding and a proliferation of high-containment labs, which has come at the expense of much-needed funding for public health research.

The NEIDL laboratory (National Emerging Infectious Disease Lab) on Albany Street in Roxbury/South End is located in a designated environmental justice neighborhood which already suffers from an excess of environmental hazards. The lab overshadows the community's most at-risk groups, including guests at Rosie's Place, children enrolled in Orchard Park Elementary School and residents of the Cathedral Housing Development. Residents of Roxbury, Dorchester and other surrounding communities have repeatedly demonstrated their opposition to the NEIDL during 12 years of efforts to stop the lab. It is difficult to fathom the decision to pursue such dangerous research in a densely populated, low-income area in the middle of the city.

Inadvertent or intentional release of pathogens has been named by the Centers for Disease Control as one of the top five health threats of 2013. Accidents and other alarming incidents at BSL3 and BSL4 labs are numerous and continue to surface. The Marathon bombing raises awareness of the NEIDL as a potential terrorist target. Improbable events do occur and, when they do, they may have terrible consequences.

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