

CHARLES C. YANCEY

Boston City Councillor

PRESS RELEASE

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BOSTON CITY COUNCIL FAILS TO BAN BIOSAFETY LEVEL-4 RESEARCH IN CITY OF BOSTON

Boston City Hall (May 15, 2014) – The Boston City Council voted 8-5 in opposition of Boston City Councillor Charles C. Yancey’s ordinance that would have banned Biosafety Level 4 research in the City of Boston on May 14, 2014 at Boston City Hall.

The vote, which represents a disturbing implication for Biolab opponents, positions Boston University’s National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratory (NEIDL) on Albany Street in Roxbury a step closer to carrying out research on critical biological agents, such as the anthrax bacteria, toxins such as ricin and botulism, and viruses such as Ebola that cause viral hemorrhagic fever (VHF).



Boston City Councillor Charles C. Yancey’s ordinance to ban Biosafety Level 4 research in the City of Boston was rejected 8-5 on May 14, 2014 at Boston City Hall.

Councillor Yancey, who called for a motion to table the vote in order to evaluate new information previously undisclosed by Boston University, was surprised and disappointed that Councillor Michael Flaherty, chair of committee on Government Operations, opposed his motion and called for the vote.

“I believe it was an unfortunate and dangerous vote. I am extremely disappointed that my colleagues opted to put the citizens of Boston at risk by rejecting a ban on Biosafety Level 4 research in the City of Boston,” he said.

Yancey also noted that Brookline, Cambridge, Newton, Arlington, and Somerville have ordinances prohibiting Biosafety Level 4 research in their cities and towns.

“Those cities and towns have all taken steps to protect their residents, a step that the Boston City Council failed to take. The Boston City Council missed an opportunity to protect its current and future residents from possible risks,” he said.

Councillor Tito Jackson, extremely disconcerted about the vote, said he would lose sleep over the fact that an institution won and the neighborhood lost.

“What just happened is we allowed a large institution to receive a Level 4 Biolab over the objections of the people of that neighborhood. A part of our city has been disempowered instead of empowered,” he said.

Klare X Allen, a community organizer in Roxbury who has devoted 12 years opposing BU’s Biosafety Level 4 research, said she felt like the eight Councillors who opposed the ban released the rope of a guillotine on the community.

“We will be housing the nation’s most deadly viruses and housing a stockpile of live pathogens,” she said.

But Allen also noted that judges at both the state and federal level still must approve Boston University’s risk assessment analysis before Level 4 research can begin at the NEIDL.

New disclosures from Boston University reveal that research planned for the Biolab’s 18 core facilities includes aerobiology studies, clinical trials in nonhuman primates and human subjects, and experiments with infected

arthropods (insects) and host animals.

Those Boston City Councillors that voted in favor of Yancey's ban on Level 4 research included Councillors Yancey, Michelle Wu, Tito Jackson, Ayanna Pressley, and Micheal Flaherty. Those voting against the ban included Councillors Frank Baker, Mark Ciommo, Salvatore LaMattina, Bill Linehan, Timothy McCarthy, Stephen M. Murphy, Matt O'Malley, and Josh Zakim.

Councillor Yancey said he was disturbed that notice of the vote did not appear on the Boston City Council's meeting agenda; therefore many residents that have fervently opposed BU's Biolab were not notified.

"We did not alert the public that the Boston City Council was about to vote on this critical matter," he said.

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