Biotechnology Innovation Organization
1201 New York Avenue NW
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March 10, 2026

RE: Opposition to HB 1133- Drug Manufacturer–Funded Disease Awareness Campaigns – Registration and Required Disclosure

Dear Maryland Legislature,

The Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO) respectfully submits this letter in opposition to HB 1133, which would require drug manufacturers and patient advocacy organizations receiving manufacturer funding to register with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) before launching any disease awareness campaign in the state. HB 1133 is harmful to patient access and public health.

Patient organizations play a critical and independent role in representing the needs of patients, even when they receive funding from pharmaceutical manufacturers. Financial support from manufacturers often helps with essential activities such as patient education, advocacy, and research; these activities do not compromise organizational autonomy. Patient advocacy organizations go through great lengths to ensure their independence. Patient advocacy organizations are essential for many patients in receiving education about their diseases, whether or not there are approved treatments for their condition.

By requiring campaign materials to include a statement identifying the marketed drug or device, HB 1133 effectively eliminates the ability to conduct unbranded disease awareness campaigns for conditions tied to any in-market product. Unbranded disease education plays a critical role in improving patient outcomes by helping individuals recognize symptoms earlier, understand disease progression, and seek appropriate medical care. For instance, cancer-care, heart disease, mental health, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and other conditions may be stigmatized or underdiagnosed and particularly benefit from additional awareness and education. Many diseases have multiple therapies or non-drug management options and are therefore better suited for an unbranded disease awareness campaign. Requiring the disclosure of a marketed drug could unintentionally suggest that one treatment is the primary or only option, when it is instead more appropriate to highlight the full spectrum of care that supports multiple treatment pathways. As such, the requirements in HB 1133 would harm patient awareness and informed decision-making by eliminating the ability to conduct unbranded disease awareness campaigns.

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In addition, the registration requirement and disclosure mandates could slow dissemination of timely public health information. In many cases, rapid education campaigns are essential to reach patients and caregivers. Requiring advance registration and subsequent disclosure and scrutiny would introduce delays that ultimately harm patients who would have otherwise benefit from expanded disease awareness and patient resources.

For these reasons, BIO respectfully urges the legislature to oppose HB 1133. We appreciate your consideration and stand ready to work collaboratively on policies that improve patient access and transparency.

Sincerely,

Russell Palk
Director, Government Affairs
BIO