

## Stimulus slights small biotech companies

Your recent front page article “Stimulus spurs grant-bid flurry” (May 20) spotlighted the excellent research capabilities of Maryland’s universities, both public and private. Certainly a \$13 billion dollar boost for basic science and funding for Maryland’s research community is welcome news.

There is, however, a glitch in the disbursement of the National Institutes of Health stimulus dollars that bears examination — namely the lack of funding for small biotechnology companies in our state and others that are actually turning research into usable products for real people. Normally, funding for NIH includes what is called the Small Business Innovative Research “set aside.”

What this means is that a small portion of the NIH funds, about 2.5 percent, are designated for small business qualified technology companies.

The stimulus funds do not have the set aside. What does that mean? It means that small struggling companies that are bringing technologies out of our research universities and translating them into real products for the medical and pharmaceutical marketplace will not even have the chance to compete for the stimulus funds. For an industry like bioscience that has already been devastated by the financial crisis, this is disheartening news.

The business community is tremendously grateful for the excellent scientific work done at our research universities, but we are equally proud of and strongly support the bold, risk-taking men and women who start small businesses to turn research into products.

They need funding too.

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