

Michigan Catholic Conference

20 May 2005

Dear Member of Congress:

As you are aware Congress may soon vote on recently introduced legislation that will allow for large-scale destruction of embryonic cells for research purposes. H.R. 810 is a dangerous measure that will permanently jeopardize human life, effectively imposing the will of the strong over the weak. I urge you to oppose this bill, and any congressional effort that allows for federal funding of embryonic stem cell research.

It is the belief of millions of Americans and this organization that in no way, shape or form should state or federal government allocate public tax dollars for the purpose of destructive human research. To that end, government has no right, whether through constitutional or natural law, to enact public policy measures for the purpose of creating or terminating human life. We are reminded that all men are created equal, and are endowed by their Creator with the certain unalienable rights of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

According to a national survey conducted by International Communications Research May 6-11, 52 percent of Americans oppose federal funding of embryonic stem cell research while just 36 percent support the measure. When respondents were told that scientists disagree on whether embryonic stem cells or adult stem cells may end up being most successful in treating diseases, 60 percent favored funding only the ethical adult stem cell research, while 22 percent favored funding all stem cell research. These percentages clearly demonstrate that Americans do not support destroying innocent human life for the purpose of research.

Over the last several years the medical field has become more familiar with the tremendous prospects of adult stem cell research, where useful stem cells are derived from such non life-threatening locations as the umbilical cord, bone marrow, blood and muscle.

This non-destructive method of research is currently treating some 58 debilitating diseases, including Multiple Sclerosis, brain cancer, sickle-cell anemia, Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injury, lymphoma, juvenile diabetes and breast cancer. Conversely, extracting stem cells from embryos to establish embryonic stem cell lines kills embryos. To date, there are no successful clinical treatments with these cells.

Indeed, Michigan has moved to the cutting-edge of research involving life science and biotechnology, most prominently due to the groundbreaking Life Sciences Corridor. This month the Michigan Senate unanimously passed measures that will spur biotechnology testing and development in our state. Wisely, provisions were included in Senate Bills 358 and 359 that disqualifies companies from discounted costs if they conduct embryonic stem cell research or human cloning.

Dr. Fawwaz Ulaby, University of Michigan Vice President for research, offered this compelling statement following Governor Granholm's announcement of a \$2 billion bond proposal: "Investing in the future of the state should be a high priority. There is no better way than investing in nano-technology and adult stem cell research."

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The fact that there is so much at stake in stem cell research makes the issue a defining one for America. It is important that we understand the whole story behind stem-cell research, and as a result understand that to support adult stem cell research while opposing embryonic stem cell research is not ideological but ethically principled and fully consistent with the goals of science.

Freedom to kill is not a true freedom, but rather a tyranny that reduces man to slavery. I ask you to examine the detrimental ramifications of H.R. 810 and strongly urge your no vote on this flawed public policy measure.

With warm regards, I am

Cordially,

Sister Monica Kostielney, R.S.M.
President and Chief Executive Officer