



Opposition Statement HB626/SB560

Animal Testing and Research – Human-Relevant Research Funding

Laura Bogley, JD

Director of Legislation, Maryland Right to Life

We Oppose HB626/SB560 As Written

On behalf of our 200,000 followers across the state, we respectfully oppose HB626/SB560 to the extent that it may commit public funding to the unethical use of human embryonic or fetal cell or tissue for the purpose of medical or even commercial research. The state of Maryland should not adopt a definition of “human-relevant” testing that includes the destruction of human embryos.

Human Embryo Testing is Unethical

Embryonic stem-cell research is routinely touted by supporters as having the potential to cure a number of diseases and medical conditions. However, the procedure for obtaining embryonic stem cells is fraught with ethical and scientific pitfalls and, importantly, such research has yet to yield an effective treatment for any disease or condition.

Living human beings in embryonic stage are destroyed in embryonic stem-cell research and human cloning. Specifically, embryonic stem-cell research is done by taking a days-old embryo that has grown to the several hundred-cell stage, breaking it apart, and taking the cells from the embryo’s inner mass. These unspecialized cells are then grown and used for research.

More than 15 years after the first isolation of embryonic stem cells, there is not a single disease that these cells can cure, regardless of whether the embryonic cells are created through the fusion of a human sperm and egg or through cloning. In fact, Geron Corporation, the company that received governmental approval for the first clinical trials using stem cells derived from human embryos, discontinued “further stem cell work” after “a strategic review of the costs... timelines and clinical, manufacturing and regulatory complexities associated with the company’s research and clinical-stage assets.”¹

Embryonic Testing is Unsuccessful

Conversely, there are proven, ethical alternatives to research using stem cells from human embryos. One important source is umbilical cord blood—a very rich source of stem cells. Another is adult stem cells, which can be obtained from various organs. For example, researchers know that bone marrow cells can form into fat, cartilage, and bone tissue. A third promising source is neural stem cells. These stem cells have been successfully isolated and cultured from living human neural tissue and even from adult cadavers.

¹ See M. Smith, *Geron Move Shows Embryonic Stem Cell Research Not Successful*, LifeNews (Nov. 15, 2011), available at <http://www.lifenews.com/2011/11/15/geron-move-shows-embryonic-stem-cell-research-not-successful/> (last visited June 26, 2017).

Moreover, since 2007, research breakthroughs are opening the door for the “reprogramming” of adult stem cells into the embryonic state—without the use or destruction of human embryos.

In sum, any alleged “therapeutic” purposes for destructive embryo research have proven to be speculative, while simultaneously crossing ethical boundaries and taking human life. As such, states should prohibit this ethically problematic research that has proven completely unnecessary.

For legislators and policy makers, it is vitally important that careful attention be exercised to avoid bans on some types of research (especially in the area of cloning) that are ineffective or that create incentives for researchers to destroy preborn human life and increase the demand for aborted fetal tissue including late term, fully developed human organs.

For these reasons we urge your amendment to ensure that any testing methods licensed or funded by the State of Maryland are ethical and prohibit the use of cells or tissues obtained from embryonic or fetal human beings. The state instead should encourage the development of ethical alternatives.