



Informational Statement SB761

Testing Facilities That Use Animals – Licensing and Regulation

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We Oppose Any Testing on Embryonic or Fetal Human Beings

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Maryland Right to Life, we urge your amendments of SB761 to prohibit the unethical use of human embryonic cells or fetal tissue for the purpose of biomedical or commercial research and testing. This bill would restrict some traditional animal testing methods, but does not specify whether the definition of “animal” includes human beings for the purposes of protection. Previously enacted legislation specifically excluded “human animals” from state protections.

We strongly oppose any policy that authorizes or expands the use of human embryonic or fetal cells or tissues, particularly those derived through abortion violence and federally prohibited human organ harvesting. We also object to “Human-Relevant” testing methods that are largely undefined but typically rely on the use of human cells, if those cells are derived from human beings in their embryonic or fetal state. The state of Maryland should authorize only ethical and humane testing methods that prioritize the state’s interest in preserving human life.

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 killed 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, including by implantation in animals and resulting animal-human hybrid abominations that disregard the dignity of each human life.

Embryonic Testing is Unsuccessful

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

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.

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 Conclusion

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 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.