



Everything Michigan

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Michigan should ease embryonic

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Michigan legislators once again are taking up the thorny issue of embryonic stem cell research.

As divisive as the debate was two years ago, it's worth another shot at loosening up the state's overly harsh restrictions.

The University of Michigan is a worldwide leader in adult stem cell research. Yet the state's laws on embryonic stem cells are among the strictest in the nation.

Scientists here are prohibited from doing anything that might damage a human embryo, no matter how early its development or how it was obtained.

Fertility clinics, for example, oftentimes implant in a woman more fertilized eggs than she can carry. Some may be removed later, and one or more left to develop to full-term birth.

Shouldn't the man and woman involved in these treatments have a say in what happens to these embryos that are removed to ensure a healthy birth of the others?

Yes, they should.

The options should include embryonic stem cell research.

Scientists say that embryonic stem cells may be the key to cures for diseases that devastate - cancer, juvenile diabetes, Parkinson's disease and spinal cord injuries.

Now, Michigan law hypocritically allows scientists to study embryonic cells, but they must be obtained from outside the state.

We let others grapple with the thorny issues involved in getting the cells, then we use them.

Michigan can't become a leader in the life sciences, as it should, without facing these issues head-on.

However they are obtained, embryonic stem cells should be harvested here.

And regulated here.

Michigan legislators have a stark choice before them.

They can either help the state's growing life sciences industries by facing the issues and helping medical research.

Or they can continue to hobble scientists with unnecessarily restrictive laws.

State Rep. Andrew Meisner, D-Ferndale, argues his bill on the merits of helping find cures for the incurable.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm in her State of the State Address, urged changes in the law for the same reason, and so Michigan's life sciences industry can continue to grow.

They face the entrenched foes of embryonic stem cell research - Right to Life of Michigan and the Michigan Catholic Conference among them.

This shouldn't be an our-way-or-the-highway battle royale.

Both sides can, and should, find common ground on the common desire to ease human suffering.

Ethically, morally and, above all, forthrightly.

The groundbreaking research - the medical miracles and rise of a new industry - and the ethics guiding it can be forged here.

Or we can let it happen somewhere else.

Michigan law now turns its back on this great debate.

It's time to turn around.

And face it.

- Our View is the editorial opinion of The Bay City Times, as determined by the newspaper's editorial board, which includes the editorial page editor, the editor and the publisher.

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