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STEM CELL BACKERS, DILLON MEET WITH GOV. POLITICS LOOMING

House [Speaker Andy Dillon](#)'s opposition to the 2008 proposal that legalized embryonic stem cell research already is drawing criticism from Democrats as he prepares to enter the gubernatorial race, and a leading stem cell advocate said Tuesday that her group is prepared to press the issue in the election.

Stem cell supporters, including Edsel Ford and officials from Michigan State University , the University of Michigan and Wayne State University , were expected to meet with Mr. Dillon (D-Redford Twp.) on Tuesday to urge that he oppose Senate bills that would place regulations on the voter-approved constitutional amendment.

Sheri Mark, president of Michigan Citizens for Stem Cell Research and Cures, said she is concerned about Mr. Dillon's past opposition to embryonic stem cell research and is prepared to educate voters in the gubernatorial race about Mr. Dillon's position if he decides to support the Senate bills.

"We're going to encourage Andy Dillon to take no action on these bills if (they) do come to him," she said. "We just want to make sure he's got all the information."

The bills ([SB 647](#), [SB 648](#), [SB 649](#), [SB 650](#), [SB 651](#) and [SB 652](#)) would require those conducting embryonic stem cell research to file an annual report with the state, prohibit research on embryos deemed not suitable for implantation, ban the sale of embryonic stem cells, create penalties for violations, among other provisions.

Ms. Mark said at a news conference that the bills would effectively gut the voter-approved constitutional amendment by discouraging researchers from wanting to conduct their efforts in Michigan .

"It's so important in terms of cures and research and jobs that we continue to promote stem cell research and not do anything to discourage it," she said.

Mr. Dillon declined an interview request through a spokesperson. He issued a prepared statement through his office that suggested reluctance toward the Senate bills.

"The voters only recently decided to add this issue to our Constitution, and we need to allow some time to see what effects it has rather than jumping in and making changes," he said. "If there are aspects that need to be addressed legislatively, I'm willing to look at that, but I'm not comfortable charging ahead and undermining the decision made by Michigan 's voters."

Based on Senate [Majority Leader Mike Bishop](#)'s comments on Tuesday, it appears to be a matter of when, not if, the Senate will take up the legislation. Mr. Bishop had been cool to the bills in the past. Ms. Mark even cited as a good sign a February 15 story in Crain's Detroit Business that suggested Mr. Bishop had bottled up the legislation.

But Tuesday, Mr. Bishop said he would support the legislation although he did not say when they would come up for a vote.

"It does not intrude upon the constitutionality of the law itself," he told reporters. "It's really our responsibility once an amendment passes like this that we have regulations in place to make sure it's administered properly. It can't be just a wild, wild west here in Michigan ."