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## **The Economic Benefits Of Stem Cell Research**

University of Michigan researchers visited the Capitol to talk up the economic benefits of passing the stem cell research legislation that was recently introduced in the House.

Michael **FINNEY**, president and CEO of SPARK, a public-private partnership for economic development in Michigan, said Michigan's laws on stem cell research are holding back the state's research and development sector.

Michigan doesn't allow people to donate their embryos that have never been implanted to science. Federal law allows for these donations as long as the parents of the unused embryos have explicitly signed off on the donations.

Other states — California for example — have been dumping millions of dollars into embryonic stem cell research because their state governments allow them to do research on these unused embryos, Finney said.

As a result, these states are seeing more research and development investment from national corporations and start-ups. Michigan could lose out on these investments, he said.

"There's not that much data out there in terms of the economic impact on this type of research," he said. However, California has seen an increase in the amount of corporate investment and job creation since the state decided to support this kind of research.

Finney said a \$1 billion investment in stem cell research in the state is possible. He estimated that for every \$500,000 spent on this type of research, one job will be created.

"Then the commercial potential of it is just staggering," he said.

Spin-off jobs and start-ups result from these kinds of investments. Finney, who is also the former vice president of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, used the 21st Century Job Fund to illustrate his point.

In 2005, Ann Arbor saw eight new start-ups that were spin-offs of 21st Century investment in the University of Michigan, he said. In 2006, these investments resulted in 23 start-ups, which is almost triple the amount that began in 2005, he said.

"We'll likely miss this if we don't find a way to be in this arena in the coming years," he said.

Finney explained that several of the scientists and researchers who worked for Pfizer before it announced its Ann Arbor closing, wanted to stay in Michigan, but couldn't find jobs in their fields.

In preparation for today's stem cell research workshop, the Catholic Conference sent out a press release that included a poll taken from April 15 and 16 of 500 likely

voters. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.38 percent and was conducted by Public Opinion Strategies.

The poll never specifically asked about or explained the House proposals. However, it did ask about stem cell research and human embryo cloning.

One question asked:

*Do you support stem cell research that clones human embryos so the stem cells can be removed?*

In answer to this question, 59 percent of those polled said no and 34 percent said yes. It should be noted that the bills in question would not allow for this.

Another stem cell question asked:

*Do you support stem cell research that kills the human embryo so the stem cells can be removed?*

In answer to that question, 70 percent said no and 25 percent said yes. The Catholic Conference describes the House bills as legislation that would "allow researchers not only to destroy human embryos, but also permit them to be cloned."

Proponents of this bill ([HB 4616](#)) would disagree with this classification on the grounds that the embryos have not been implanted and are not cloned.

"Regardless of what term is used to make cloning sound more amenable to the public, the bottom line is that cloning is cloning is cloning," said Paul **LONG** with the Catholic Conference. "It is our hope that those who support legislative efforts and a possible ballot proposal will be upfront and honest with Michigan residents, eliminate the euphemisms and truthfully discuss the details of embryonic stem cell research and its relation to human cloning."

The researchers also went over the ethical and legal questions surrounding stem cell research. They repeatedly pointed out that the stem cell bills in the Michigan House would only bring Michigan in line with federal law.