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Stem Cell 'Implementation' Bills Get Skeptical Eye

Senate Republicans today kicked around in committee a package of bills designed to "implement" the stem cell research ballot proposal voters enacted last year, but advocates for the former Proposal 2 say the extra legislation isn't needed and questioned the bill proponents' motivations.

The bills taken up today in the Senate Health Policy Committee -- [SB 0647-0652](#) -- are billed as setting regulations on stem cell research that were added to the Constitution under Proposal 2, but could also be argued as mechanisms championed by Right to Life to weaken the proposal.

Sen. Roger **KAHN** (R-Saginaw), the sponsor of SB 649, explained that his bill requires consent for performing in vitro fertilization (IVF). It requires IVF's to be reported to the Department of Community Health (DCH), sets standards for reports, and sets penalties for violating these procedures.

When asked by Sen. Gilda **JACOBS** (D-Huntington Woods) the general purpose of this package, Kahn responded that regulations were needed to implement Proposal 2.

"What we're looking for is a methodology to implement this Constitutional amendment, Proposal 2," said Kahn.

Dr. Graham **PARKER**, of Wayne State University's Michigan Children's Hospital, testified in opposition to these bills, saying that stem cell research advances are needed, and that researchers are on their way to making new discoveries. He said that he had no interest in changing anyone's personal beliefs on stem cells, but noted that these bills would restrict the research that had been done under Proposal 2.

"We need America's brightest and best to work on all stem cell research. Michigan has the brightest and best," said Parker.

Additional words in opposition were provided by Laura **JACKSON**, of Michigan Citizens for Stem Cell Research and Cures, who also added her concern that these bills would restrict research.

Sen. Bruce **PATTERSON** (R-Canton) responded that these bills were not to restrict Proposal 2, but are required in order to properly implement the proposal, and that it is common procedure for the legislature to set down regulations for the Michigan Constitution.

Former House Speaker Rick **JOHNSON** of Cure Michigan brought up that over two million Michigan residents voted for Proposal Two, including the constituents of the members of the committee. He said that these bills undercut what the people voted for, and said that Michigan universities were doing a great job of regulating and monitoring their research.

"Do you find it ironic that this legislature had an opportunity to do something? Two million people overwhelmingly voted for this, and now this legislature wants to cut it off," said Jacobs in response to Johnson.

Cynthia **WILBANKS** and Gary **SMITH**, representing the University of Michigan, also voiced their opposition to these bills, noting that there are federal guidelines regulating research, and reiterating that the universities have been able to properly monitor their own research.