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NEW ECONOMY AND QUALITY OF LIFE
TAX POLICY

MEISNER, MEADOWS AND BIPARTISAN COALITION OFFER COMPROMISE STEM CELL BILLS TO MOVE MICHIGAN FORWARD ON CRITICAL RESEARCH

Bills Limit Research to Left Over Embryos, Will Promote Biotech Jobs

Lansing – Joined by a bipartisan coalition, Rep. Andy Meisner of Oakland County today announced he has introduced compromise legislation to lift restrictions on embryonic stem cell research in Michigan, while providing principled and ethical regulations for the process and increasing penalties for human cloning.

“Around the nation, state after state is saying yes to life and cures – and yes to jobs by embracing and investing in embryonic stem cell research. It’s time for Michigan to do the same,” said Meisner. **“This compromise legislation will allow us to take that first step, while providing safeguards to ensure research that is ethical and transparent, and a ban on human cloning.”**

House Bill 4616 removes Michigan's restrictions on embryonic stem cell research – among the worst in the country – with some limits. It requires informed, written consent from donors before left over embryos from fertility clinics can be donated to research, and expressly prohibits embryo donors from receiving any financial or other benefit. These excess or damaged embryos would otherwise be discarded as medical waste. Instead, under this legislation, these embryos will be used to help find cures for debilitating diseases like Parkinson’s, juvenile diabetes, Alzheimer’s, cancer, ALS, and spinal cord injuries.

HB 4616 also removes Michigan's restrictions on a procedure called nuclear transfer that allows researchers to develop stem cells that match a patient's own DNA. This process will overcome the enormous challenge of patients’ bodies rejecting treatments and transplants by having the treatments match patients’ genetic code.

House Bills 4617 and 4618 sponsored by Representative Mark Meadows of East Lansing increase criminal penalties for human reproductive cloning, making it clear that even attempting to clone a human being is unacceptable and beyond the pale of what any responsible researcher or policymaker is advocating. HB 4617 will also establish heightened financial penalty for violation of the ban; HB 4618 is a companion bill that adjusts sentencing guidelines.

"I am proud to sponsor part of a package of bills which will facilitate expansion of opportunities in Michigan's research corridor. My part of the package is crafted to address some of the philosophical issues that have been raised," said Meadows. **"We are confident that no one can argue that these embryos are better off disposed of as medical waste than being used to treat illness and injuries. My bills should establish assurance that cloning will never be part of the research protocol."**

Former House Speaker Rick Johnson joined the group in support of the legislation.

“These bills will bring Michigan in line with states such as Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa, which are creating jobs and potential cures under similar legal guidelines,” said former House Speaker

Rick Johnson, who is supporting the legislation. “Michigan needs cures and jobs, and this bill provides both in an ethical way.”

Lee Noll is president of BioFlow Technology, a small business involved in selling a key product used in stem cell research, including embryonic stem cells, and must decide whether to leave Michigan’s restrictive climate for a state more open to scientific research.

“Unless Michigan changes its laws, I will be forced to relocate all or a major portion of our development laboratories to another state,” said Noll. “If Michigan needs jobs, it should pass this legislation.”

Cathy Coury, a volunteer with Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation of West Michigan, said people don’t understand that it is vital for scientists to research both adult stem cells and embryonic stem cells. While some treatments have come from adult stem cell research, scientists believe it will be necessary to use embryonic stem cells to turn the lessons learned from adult stem cells into commercially applicable cures.

“Adult stem cells are remarkably hard to grow and the treatments they are providing are extraordinarily expensive. Only embryonic stem cells have been proven to have the capability to grow into every cell in the human body, and can grow virtually indefinitely in a fairly short period. Embryonic stem cell research will provide the cures for the common man and woman — and boy and girl — in the years to come,” said Coury.

Daniel Heumann, a lawyer and founder of the Daniel Heumann Fund for Spinal Cord Research, said he is convinced embryonic stem cell research holds hope for people who have suffered from paralysis due to spinal cord injuries.

“How much longer do people with disabilities and diseases have to wait for the Michigan legislature to finally allow our scientists to do research that will not only help the suffering of patients, but help our suffering economy?”

Marcia Baum, executive director of Michigan Citizens for Stem Cell Research & Cures, an educational group, said she has found strong support for both adult and embryonic stem cell research as she has crossed the state speaking on the issue.

“Michigan citizens are overwhelmingly interested in learning about all forms of stem cell research including the hope researchers have for embryonic stem cell research,” Baum said. “The public is often surprised to find out that we have some of the most restrictive embryonic stem cell research laws in the nation.”

Meisner noted that his legislation has the support of Gov. Jennifer Granholm, who has been a strong advocate for embryonic stem cell research in the state, along with Republicans including former Speaker Johnson, former U.S. Rep. John Schwarz, and others.

“An overwhelming majority of Michigan citizens and Americans agree that supporting stem cell research is the only truly pro-life position on the issue. That was reflected in the recent vote on very similar legislation in the U.S. Congress that drew support from prominent anti-abortion advocates John McCain, Orrin Hatch and others,” said Meisner.