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## Stabenow Floor Speech Supporting Stem Cell Research

Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to vote 'yes' on S. 5. This is a bill that will bring hope to millions of Americans and their families. This is the bill; this is the opportunity for us to move forward on critically needed research. By passing the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, we can make a major step forward in scientific research and bring hope and help to millions of Americans fighting a debilitating disease every day.

I think, Mr. President, we all have members of our own families who can speak to those issues, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, juvenile diabetes, other kinds of diseases where we know that just with a little bit of help and focus, both in terms of stem cell research, but also in terms of funding research, that we can see huge changes, huge opportunities for treatment and for cures. And that's really what this bill is all about. And it's so important that we move forward in a positive way and pass this bill as quickly as possible.

You know, it's really very sad that we have this issue up before us again. In the last Congress, we passed legislation by wide bipartisan margins to lift the President's restriction on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. By wide margins, the majority of Americans supported this legislation and still support this legislation.

Unfortunately, the President issued his first, and so far, only veto to strike down our legislation. And so we're back here again.

Mr. President, I know how deeply personal this issue is for many people. And I respect many of my colleagues have different views on stem cell research, but I've also studied this issue very extensively. And over the past several years, I've met with people from all different faiths, all different backgrounds, from religious figures to medical researchers on the cutting edge of breakthrough technology, to mothers who have to give multiple, daily injections to their children to help them make it through the day.

They argue that many diseases and chronic conditions, as I've mentioned before, diabetes and also ALS, Parkinson's, spinal cord injuries, many types of cancers will be treated or even cured with stem cell research. Too many families are struggling to care for children with diabetes, or are watching elderly parents succumb to Alzheimer's disease, like my husband did, or like my grandmother who died of Parkinson's disease. Too many Americans suffer from illnesses that make ordinary things like daily household chores nearly impossible.

As co-chair of the Senate bipartisan Parkinson's Caucus, I've received letters and calls from people all across our great nation on how important stem cell research is to them, how important this legislation, this opportunity at this time is to them and their families. I've met many Michigan families who deal with chronic health issues every single day.

For example, a wonderful advocate and friend from Grand Rapids shared with me his daughter's story, Kate's story. When she was twelve years old she was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes. Her family took her for multiple visits to the hospital and injected her with insulin three to four times every single day. These routines only helped to manage Kate's disease, not cure it. As a teenager, Kate worked as a counselor at a camp for children with diabetes. She watched as some of her fellow counselors began experiencing the early stages of blindness caused by juvenile diabetes. I can't imagine how terrifying it must be to begin to go blind when you should be thinking about going to the prom or graduating from high school. None of us want that for our children.

Another bright young woman who visited my office several times is Julielyn Gibbons. For over 12 years, Julielyn has lived with Crohn's diseases - a disease that causes intense abdominal pain. For her, stem cell research offers the promise of not only curing this life-long, debilitating disease, but also the hope of being able to live a normal life. She emailed me, 'I want to be able to bring children into the world knowing that they won't have to suffer as I have and that possibility best exists through stem cell research.' S. 5, a strong bipartisan bill, is an important, in fact, a critical step forward toward giving Julielyn and Kate that hopeful future that we all want for our children.

S.5 expands federal financing research on additional stem cell lines created from embryos freely donated from in vitro fertilization clinics under strict ethical guidelines. These embryos are frozen and will likely be destroyed. Think about that. These are frozen embryos that will likely be thrown in the garbage can. They are being thrown away. Which is better? To have the opportunity to use those cells, those precious cells to be able to create life, to create cures? Or to see them thrown away, which is what's happening right now. This bill also would authorize the National Institutes of Health to look at other ways of creating new stem cell lines. This does not preclude other opportunities for research. In fact, this is a bill to make it clear that we want to use every possibility to save life, to be able to cure diseases, and that we will continue to see that that's done with the highest ethical standards, which is guaranteed under this legislation.

The current administration's policy is frankly tying the hands of scientists and impeding their progress on treatments and cures for diseases that families every day are waiting for. Sean Morrison, the Director of the University of Michigan's Center for Stem Cell Biology told me that the federally approved lines are of limited use because they're not genetically diverse enough to realize the full potential of this research, and so many more are needed. In other words, we don't have enough right now. We can't do what needs to be done, what families are asking for across this country. While we look forward, we look toward the future; we should remember those who have passed while we've had this debate as well.

Every day the clock is ticking on somebody who is ill. Every day the clock is ticking on somebody with a fatal disease that could be helped in some way or cured if we were doing everything we could to provide the research and the cures and the treatments. What pains me the most is that some of the brave advocates I've had the privilege to meet during my Congressional career are no longer here today, no longer here this week to see this vote.

Hopefully we will not have many more people that will be seeing their lives deteriorate or lose their lives before we are able to actually begin to do what needs to be done with this research. It's for them and for all the families I've met that I will cast my vote this week: a vote for life, for hope, for a bright future. I know that the cures won't come tomorrow, but they may never come if we do not act now. I urge all of my colleagues to vote 'yes' on S. 5, and I urge the President of the United States to do the right thing, to do what the overwhelming majority of the American people are asking him to do, and asking us to do, which is to say 'yes' to lifesaving research, say 'yes' to those things that will provide hope for a cure for the future. I hope we will say 'yes' in a very large margin to S. 5.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.