

## Talk, Study, Cure

### Stem cell hearing should lead to greater research

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Two hours wasn't nearly enough. Still, Michigan lawmakers ought to study carefully the testimony from Tuesday's historic hearing on repealing parts of the state ban on embryonic stem cell research. If they can separate promise from pleadings, compassionate and logical lawmakers will lift the ban and let science attempt to realize the full potential of embryonic stem cells.

Even while trying to build its Life Sciences Corridor, and while other states such as California pour big money into this research, Michigan retains some of the strictest restrictions on this kind of scientific study, which has the potential to reverse, or at least better treat, a variety of diseases, including juvenile diabetes, Parkinson's disease and muscular dystrophy.

Because Michigan law bans embryos from being destroyed in research -- never mind that they're regularly discarded after infertile couples complete their families -- no embryonic cell study can originate here. Local scientists can study lines created in labs elsewhere, but existing lines are contaminated and could never be used in humans. They also tend to come from the same wealthy, white, infertile pool, which hardly reflects the diversity of the nation, the University of Michigan's Dr. Sean Morrison said. Lifting the ban could let U-M broaden the reach of potential cures.

Some of Tuesday's most emotional testimony came from parents of so-called snowflake babies, embryos offered for adoption and implanted in other women. These mothers begged the committee not to let their children, and others like them, be sacrificed to science.

But this is not an either-or proposition. There's room for adoption *and* research, which both derive from the same science. None of this is the "natural" development that Right to Life purports to protect. The few embryos that are adopted have to be implanted in a person to develop. Those that are not offered or adopted should not be thrown away when they can be used to help people who are ailing.

Committee Chair Ed Gaffney, R-Grosse Pointe Farms, deserves credit for bucking his party to hold the hearing, which went twice as long as most in a large Capitol room that was filled beyond capacity. Obviously Michigan is ready to have this conversation -- and should be ready to embrace the research to which it may lead.

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