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## Editorial: State shouldn't over-regulate stem cell research

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A year after Michigan voters approved the broader use of donated embryos for stem cell research, some state legislators are seeking to put limits on the science. Since the voters already have spoken, Lansing shouldn't meddle in this promising research.

It's instructive that this legislative effort is led by opponents of embryonic stem cell research.

While limited state regulation may not be out of line, the rules proposed in these bills threaten to undo Michigan's progress in a developing field of scientific inquiry that could lead to treatment or cures for some of our most profound disorders.

Embryos, or spheres containing about 100 undifferentiated cells, are used. Couples can donate those not utilized as part of their effort to have babies.

The chief source is in-vitro fertilization clinics, which reportedly have more than 400,000 unused embryos across the country. Frozen and in storage, the majority of these embryos ultimately would be discarded, researchers say.

The University of Michigan, Wayne State and Michigan State universities have formed a stem cell research institute backed by retail mogul and philanthropist A. Alfred Taubman, who led the effort to win voter approval of stem cell research here. The director of the institute, Dr. Eva Feldman, was a principal investigator of the first investigative use of stem cells to treat Lou Gehrig's disease, a fatal disorder.

Senate-proposed bills would require Feldman and other scientists, before using an embryo for experimentation, to determine if it is unlikely the embryo could successfully be implanted in a womb.

U-M embryologist Gary Smith testified that it isn't possible to predict the probability of successful implantation in the way required by the legislation.

This proposed rule would become a significant roadblock and might prevent the use of most new embryos donated through fertilization clinics.

Authors of the legislation also want to require that researchers file annual reports with the Michigan Department of Community Health about the number of embryos they receive, source of each, the number used in research, number discarded without being used and the number retained in storage.

What would be the benefit of this government involvement?

A state bureaucracy struggling to address problems such as Medicaid fraud and foster care abuse doesn't need to be handed new record-keeping responsibilities, especially if they're aimed at research that's already well-regulated.

The proposed state mandates would be added to U.S. Food and Drug Administration stem cell rules and the ethical standards the researchers already have developed and imposed upon themselves to govern the work that they do.

Citizens endorsed the use of embryonic stem cell research by 53 percent to 47 percent in a November 2008 ballot measure. The state is well on the way to becoming a leader in the field.

Lawmakers should respect the voters' wishes and not try to thwart them through burdensome rule-making.