

To: Senator Brown

From:

Sharon Quick, MD, FCP, FAAP

Washington State Coordinator, American Academy of Medical Ethics

Re: OPPOSE EHB 1268

Thank you for voting to oppose EHB 1268 yesterday. I hope that this bill is not reconsidered.

This very poorly written bill encourages human cloning for research purposes and human embryonic stem cell research (which requires destroying a human embryo). The language in this bill (probably unintentionally) allows human cloned embryos to be created and implanted in a uterus as long as they are aborted prior to birth for use of their cells or tissue. Unlike California's Proposition 71, this bill does not limit human embryonic stem cell research to leftover human embryos but would allow their manufacture purely for destructive research purposes. Physicians are required to give infertility patients options for disposition of their embryos that include destroying them or donating them for destructive research—there is no conscience clause for physicians. Not all infertility centers create excess human embryos in the first place; some only create the number that will be implanted.

Human cloning and destructive embryo research are unsafe, unethical, largely unsuccessful, impractical, and unnecessary. This is in spite of 20 years of embryonic stem cell (ESC) research in animals and 6 years of lab research using human ESCs. This kind of research is harmful not only to human embryos, but potentially to women and patients as well.

In contrast, adult stem cell (ASC) research is already accomplishing many of the same clinical goals in a safe and ethical manner. The score for successful stem cell treatments in human clinical applications is ASC research = 58, HESC research = 0 (www.stemcellresearch.org).

ASC research or other therapies that compete with ESC research may actually threaten the income of scientists, institutions, and companies that generate this income from patenting of human embryonic stem cell lines and methodology in using them. Many scientists who support human embryonic stem cell research have a financial bias that is often not made public in the media. In other words, while most researchers have patient interests at heart, some may be evaluating the science and the ethics of this research through a lens of dollar signs. (See: <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2001/0211.munro.html>)

In fact, destructive human embryo research will probably not help patients so much as it will increase the revenue (at least in the short term) of biotech companies, scientists, and research institutions. Eventually, though, this research without clinical results will implode. As Dr. Daryl Sas (Professor of Biology) says, "Does the state of Washington really want to tie its economic hopes to another Titanic?" According to Forbes magazine, the arena of highly speculative embryonic stem cell research is one of "dumb money" investments (http://www.forbes.com/2004/11/01/cz_sg_1101soapbox.html).

EHB 1268 would authorize unethical research that could be funded by public dollars if E2SSB 5581 passes. The House has removed the cloning ban placed into E2SSB 5581 by the Senate, although this ban is inadequate to prevent human cloning.

It is unconscionable to use public dollars in research ventures that are not only unethical but also a gamble. The scientific data support adult stem cell research as being the best investment for our research dollars with the most likely chance of producing new, safe, and ethical cures in the lifetimes of those patients who are living now. If Washington State invests its limited research dollars into adult stem cell research, it will be a leader in making the hope for a cure a reality,

instead of wasting dollars on unsafe, unethical, and unnecessary research with human cloning and human embryonic stem cells.

"Bill raises too many ethical questions"

Seattle Post-Intelligencer, April 7, 2005

http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/opinion/219054_clone07.html

See attached documents for more details; the letter outlines language problems with this bill. More information and references are available upon request.