



## Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities

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### **OPPOSE S. 5 (EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS) AND H.R. 2560 (HUMAN CLONING)**

June 6, 2007

Dear Representative:

Soon the House may again vote on a bill (S. 5) to promote the destruction of human embryos to obtain their stem cells. I urge you to reject this misguided and unethical legislation, which would force taxpayers for the first time to encourage deliberate attacks on innocent human life in the name of medical progress.

Because I have written to you on this issue before, I want only to note three facts that have become even more apparent in recent months.

First, on a practical level, embryonic stem cell research has been as disappointing in its results as it has been divisive to our society. Problems such as uncontrollable growth and tumor formation have forced researchers to conclude that it may take a decade or more of expensive research even to determine whether embryonic stem cells may someday be used to treat a human condition.

Second, pursuit of this destructive research will almost certainly require you to embrace more and more egregious violations of moral norms in the effort to bring its “promise” to fruition. As if to underscore this fact, supporters will bring up a bill to facilitate human cloning for research purposes (H.R. 2560) even before the vote on S. 5. While all attempts to mass-produce human embryos by cloning have been marked by failure and outright fraud so far, success in this area is deemed essential by supporters because the current supply of so-called “spare” embryos available for research is so limited in number and genetic diversity.

H.R. 2560 may be promoted as a ban on human cloning. But it is exactly the opposite. This bill, sponsored by Rep. DeGette (D-CO), allows unlimited cloning of human embryos for research – and then makes it a crime to transfer the embryo to a womb to allow the new human being to survive. What it actually prohibits is the act of becoming pregnant – a kind of law chiefly seen until now in the People’s Republic of China, where women can be punished for carrying an unauthorized child. For the first time in U.S. law, Congress would define a class of new developing human beings that it is a crime *not* to destroy. Such legislation is not a partial ban on cloning, but is worse than doing nothing at all on the issue. Yet this is the direction in which the embryonic stem cell agenda is now taking us.

Third, ethically sound research using non-embryonic stem cells has continued to advance, helping patients with over 70 conditions in clinical trials (see [www.stemcellresearch.org](http://www.stemcellresearch.org)). Patients treated with adult or cord blood stem cells for cerebral palsy, spinal cord injury, myeloma, leukemia, heart disease and other conditions have visited Capitol Hill to add their voices to this debate. Since Congress debated this issue last summer, further evidence has emerged on the versatility of adult stem cells, and on the ability of adult cells to be reprogrammed to rival the flexibility of embryonic cells.

Senate supporters of S. 5 have also added a section to their bill promoting such alternative techniques. However, this language includes no provision for stem cells with great clinical promise (unless they are also shown to be “pluripotent”). More troubling, it refuses even to define the key term “human embryo,” but automatically references whatever definition happens to appear in a given year’s appropriations bill – an unacceptable loophole at a time when the appropriations process is controlled by those who support embryo destruction.

The most serious defect in the “alternative” attachment to S. 5, however, is what it is attached *to*. The sponsors are saying they will explore ways to achieve the benefits of stem cell research within moral limits, but only if they can also violate those limits.

Leading supporters of embryonic stem cell research, such as President Clinton’s National Bioethics Advisory Commission, have conceded that “the derivation of stem cells from embryos remaining following infertility treatments is justifiable only if no less morally problematic alternatives are available for advancing the research.” If the research can be done without destroying life, said the Commission, it *must* be done only in that way. S. 5 acknowledges that this may well be feasible, then insists on destroying life regardless. The section added to S. 5 does not remedy the legislation’s ethical problems, but only underscores the underlying bill’s cavalier attitude toward moral limits.

I urge you to vote against S. 5, and against the DeGette bill allowing human cloning for research purposes -- on behalf of taxpayers who should not be forced to help destroy innocent life, and on behalf of genuine progress for suffering patients.

Sincerely,



Cardinal Justin Rigali  
Archbishop of Philadelphia  
Chairman, Committee for Pro-Life Activities  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops