



Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities

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Dear Representative:

On behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops I am writing to urge you to sustain the President's veto of H.R. 810, the "Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act."

This bill violates a decades-long policy against forcing taxpayers to support the destruction of early human life. Federal funds would promote research using "new" embryonic stem cell lines, encouraging researchers to destroy countless human embryos to provide more cell lines and qualify for federal grants. However, no alleged future "promise" can justify promoting the destruction of innocent human life here and now, whatever its age or condition.

The argument that "excess" embryos may be discarded by clinics anyway is morally deficient. Such arguments have been rejected by our government in all other contexts, as when harmful experiments have been proposed on death-row prisoners or on unborn children intended for abortion. The fact that others may do harm to these nascent lives gives Congress no right to join in the killing, much less to make everyone else complicit in it through their tax dollars.

While these moral considerations are paramount, it is also worth noting that the factual assumptions behind the embryonic stem cell campaign are questionable. Embryonic stem cell research is not showing the remarkable "promise" claimed by supporters, but lags far behind adult stem cells and other approaches that are providing real treatments for dozens of conditions. Experts now predict that treatments may emerge in "decades" or not at all. Other experts admit that use of so-called "spare" embryos is only a transitional step in any case, that *creating* human embryos (by cloning or by *in vitro* fertilization) *solely* for destructive research will be the next essential step. We also know that only 3% of frozen embryos in fertility clinics are designated by their parents for use in research – ensuring that attempts to move toward large-scale research or treatments will require creating and destroying new human lives on a massive scale.

Technical progress that makes humans themselves into mere raw material for research is in fact a regress in our humanity. In the name of sound ethics and responsible science, I strongly urge you to sustain the veto of H.R. 810.

Sincerely,

Cardinal William H. Keeler
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman, Committee for Pro-Life Activities
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops