



Testimony
SB 5594 - Embryonic Stem Cell Research
Senate Labor, Commerce, Research & Development Committee
February 1, 2005

Good Afternoon Madame Chair and members of the Committee. My name is Matt Muckler and I am the Legislative Director for the Washington State Catholic Conference, which represents the Catholic bishops of Washington State on public policy issues.

As I have referenced in my earlier testimony, the Catholic Church supports adult stem cell research as a morally acceptable means of achieving medical progress. We also support research using stem cells derived from umbilical cords and placentas provided there is no destruction of human life. Adult stem cell research is a promising source of scientific knowledge leading to improved quality of life and health. Adult stem cells and other ethically acceptable alternatives have already helped hundreds of thousands of patients, and new clinical uses expand almost weekly.

The Catholic Church opposes somatic cell nuclear transfer and embryonic stem cell research which results in the destruction of human embryos. In the Church's view, human life, including embryonic human life, deserves full respect and protection at every stage of development. This extends to whether the living human embryo is inside or outside the mother's womb, or whether it is created sexually or asexually. It is intrinsically wrong to destroy innocent human life.

The potential for scientific advancement does not justify an immoral act, in this case the killing of a human embryo to extract stem cells. The Church sees such destructive uses of human embryos as immoral, and a violation of fundamental tenets that are found even in secular codes on human experimentation. One cannot approve doing deadly harm to a human being even under the assumption that the act has potential benefit for others. Scientific progress and the alleviation of human pain and suffering must not be made at the expense of human life.

We have grave concerns that should SB 5594 pass in its current form, it would grant legislative approval for the destruction of embryonic human life by promoting embryonic stem cell research. We therefore ask that the bill be amended to remove references to embryonic stem cell research and encourage adult stem cell research. Thank you for your consideration.