



## Testimony

HB 1163 – Creating a human stem cell research advisory committee

HB 1732 - Developing guidelines for plant, animal, and human therapy research conducted in the state

House Technology, Energy and Communications Committee

February 7, 2007

Chairman Morris and members of the Committee, my name is Antonio Cube and I am testifying on behalf of the Washington State Catholic Conference, which represents the Catholic bishops of Washington State on public policy issues.

The Catholic Church supports the promotion of life sciences research to improve the quality and delivery of health care for the people of Washington State. We are particularly interested in promoting adult stem cell research in order to find cures and treatments for diseases and conditions that afflict many people.

The suffering endured by many people as a result of debilitating diseases and accidents is a source of great distress for all of us concerned with the quality of human life. To alleviate suffering and find cures for incapacitating diseases and injuries, 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 thousands of people with Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injury, heart damage, sickle-cell anemia and many other conditions, and new clinical uses derived from the research expand almost weekly.

There is also new research being done using stem cells from amniotic fluid that offers significant potential for developing cures. Researchers at Wake Forest University and Harvard University reported in early January that the stem cells they drew from amniotic fluid donated by pregnant women hold much the same promise as embryonic stem cells. So far they have been able to develop brain, liver and bone tissue from them. A Swiss researcher claims to have developed heart tissue from amniotic stem cells.

The Catholic Church opposes any research using human embryos that results in their destruction. Most embryonic stem cells are "harvested" only after destroying viable human embryos. 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.

Proponents of embryonic stem cell research will argue that those cells hold more promise for finding cures to diseases. This is debatable and the potential is years into the future as these cells

have proven to cause tumors. We also respectfully counter that 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 destructive use of human embryos is also 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 must not be made at the expense of human life.

While WSCC opposes all embryonic stem cell research, it should be of grave concern to all of you that neither of these bills bans reproductive cloning, the creation of a human person. The legislation must provide some direction and limitation to the research authorized by the advisory committee. In previous legislative sessions, when stem cell research bills have been considered, there was always language to ban reproductive cloning.

In your consideration of these bills, please also remember the important fact that in over two decades – and millions of dollars spent – the results of embryonic stem cell research have yet to help one person. Lastly, we ask that the bill be amended to remove references to embryonic research that results in the destruction of the human embryo.

Thank you for your consideration.