



Testimony to the Public Health Committee, Connecticut General Assembly

SB 464 - AN ACT CONCERNING STEM CELL RESEARCH

March 3, 2008

Senator Handley, Representative Sayers, and Members of the Committee:

Yale University is gratified by the leadership your Committee and the State of Connecticut have shown in supporting stem cell research. Your efforts have made Connecticut a national leader and have allowed scientists at Connecticut's universities to pursue work that will both improve human health and that is contributing to our state's economic vitality.

We would like to propose minor change to the revisions you are considering, through SB 464, to the Connecticut Human Embryonic Stem Cell ("hESC") Statute that was adopted in 2005.

That statute required review and approval of stem cell research by an institutional review board ("IRB"). Consistent with evolving national practice, the proposed amendment requires review and approval for stem cell research by an embryonic stem cell research oversight committee ("ESCRO").

Sections (d)(4) and (d)(5) of the hESC Statute require review of stem cell research by an institutional review committee, also known as an institutional review board ("IRB"). An IRB is a federally mandated committee that reviews research on human subjects to make sure the subjects get informed consent and are treated well. IRBs are required for research that involves interaction with human subjects, such as the collecting donated gametes (egg and sperm cells).

Once the gametes have been donated, however, there are no human subjects, and there is nothing for the IRB to do. What needs to be reviewed are the medical and ethical issues arising from the stem cell research, and that is what an ESCRO is designed to do.

With the proposed addition of section (d)(6), requiring ESCRO review of "all activities involving embryonic stem cells," all stem cell research is reviewed by the appropriate oversight committee, there is no need for sections (d)(4) and (d)(5) mandating review by an IRB.

We therefore respectfully request that CGS 19a-32d(d)(4) and (d)(5) be deleted.

This minor change will make the statutes conform with national practice and will eliminate any confusion regarding the appropriate roles, respectively, of IRBs and ESCROs.

Respectfully submitted,

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