



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

### TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE March 3, 2008

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### Senate Bill 464 - An Act Concerning Stem Cell Research

The Department of Public Health supports Senate Bill 464.

This legislation makes three changes to Connecticut's existing stem cell legislation. Two of the changes will facilitate the sharing of human embryonic stem cell research across both state and international borders and the third requires the establishment of a special review body for all human embryonic stem cell research in the state:

1. This bill adds language requiring that the consent obtained for donations of embryos left after in vitro fertilization (IVF) comply with the requirements in the National Academies' Guidelines for Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research. Connecticut's current stem cell law does not require that donors of egg or sperm give consent to such donation. It only requires that consent be obtained from the patient who has received infertility treatment when an embryo unused in the in vitro fertilization process is donated for stem cell research.

The lack of donor consent could be a barrier to the sharing of human embryonic stem cell (hESC) lines developed in Connecticut as other jurisdictions will not approve research protocols on hESC lines developed without adequate consent. Both the National Academies' Guidelines for Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research and the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine's Standards require consent from donors. This amendment will ensure that Connecticut's researchers follow this widely accepted practice.

2. The bill also inserts language from the National Academies' Guidelines that would allow the use in Connecticut of hESC lines such as those from the United Kingdom, Canada and the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine that were developed under requirements that might differ slightly from Connecticut's but are sufficiently similar as to be substantially equivalent. The bill would require: that the cell lines must have the donation protocol reviewed by an Institutional Review Board, or if the lines were developed outside the United States, a substantially equivalent oversight body; there must be informed and voluntary consent; the donation must not have been paid for; and the donation must be legal in the relevant jurisdiction.

This language does not compromise any of the ethical or legal requirements of Connecticut's law but does clarify that stem cell lines from different jurisdictions with slightly different rules or approval mechanisms will be able to be used in Connecticut.

3. Finally, the bill adds a requirement that all human embryonic stem cell research conducted in Connecticut, regardless of the source of funding, must have such research overseen by a special review body called an Embryonic Stem Cell Review Oversight (ESCRO) committee. The composition and responsibilities of an ESCRO committee are described in the National Academies' Guidelines and are adopted by this bill.

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Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.



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