

PRESS RELEASE...

... from the Illinois House of Representatives

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz

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Feigenholtz Stem Cell Research Bill Passes

SPRINGFIELD – State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago) voted Thursday to use public funding to support embryonic stem cell research in Illinois. The historic, bipartisan legislation, House Bill 138, marks the first time the House has approved embryonic stem cell research.

“I am grateful to my fellow legislators for having the wisdom to approve this measure,” Feigenholtz said. “The steps we have taken to approve and fund stem cell research will pave the way for medical miracles with tremendous life-saving potential. We are making an important investment and one that will keep Illinois competitive with other states that have already approved similar legislation.”

The bill permits research involving the derivation and use of human embryonic stem cells from any source, human embryonic germ cells, and human adult stem cells from any source, including somatic cell nuclear transplantation. Additionally, the bill authorizes the Department of Public Health to develop and administer the Illinois Regenerative Medicine Institute Program to provide and award grants to Illinois medical research institutions.

“Stem cell biology offers the future possibility of regenerating organs damaged by diseases such as diabetes, heart attack, Parkinson’s disease, spinal chord injury, and many other disorders,” said Dr. John Kessler, Director of the Northwestern University Stem Cell Institute and Chairman of the University’s Department of Neurology. “It is truly wonderful to see the government of the State of Illinois stepping up to the plate to meet the moral and ethical obligation to help the people of Illinois, and all other Americans, by supporting embryonic stem cell research.”

While there are different types of stem cells that can be obtained from different sources of tissue donors, it is the human embryonic stem cell that offers the greatest potential opportunities for curing a range of human diseases. Opponents of the use of embryonic stem cells have suggested that different types of cells have the same potential; however, no other type of stem cell can generate all of the different types of cells in all of the organs of the body. The House approved House Bill 138 by a vote of 67-46.

“For years now, rooms filled with experts and politicians, who debated one of the most important moral choices that Americans and our political leaders face – how will we support the stunningly important, deeply hopeful, yet unchartered future in this basic research?” said Dr. Laurie Zoloth from the Center for Bioethics, Science and Society at Northwestern University. “For the vast majority of faiths, this research is not only permitted, it is commanded by a loving God who teaches us to heal, care for, and repair the brokenness of the yearning world.”

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In addition to approving stem cell research and authorizing state funds towards such research, the measure bans the cloning of human beings. Embryonic stem cell research may lead to breakthrough treatments and cures for some of the world's most traumatic diseases. Scientists who abuse such research and attempt to clone a human being face a Class 4 felony charge and Class 1 felony charges for subsequent violations. Embryonic stem cell research aimed towards treating and curing disease is supported by over 70 percent of Americans.

“This bill is about saving lives and retaining and attracting the best doctors in the world to Illinois to do research,” said Feigenholtz. “There is a new hope for Illinoisans and people all over the world that medical research, with the full support of government, will unlock cures to some of the most dreadful diseases in our society today.”

For more information on House Bill 138 visit www.ilga.gov or contact Feigenholtz at (217) 782-8062.

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