

James C. Greenwood
President & CEO

April 10, 2007

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Leader:

As President & CEO of the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO), I am writing to express BIO's support for S. 5, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act. This bill expands the research that our nation's leading scientists believe holds the promise of finding cures and treatments for the millions of patients who currently suffer from a variety of diseases and disabilities.

Although our nation's existing federal stem cell policy has advanced this important field, it is clear that an expanded program is essential for this research to achieve its full potential. As Dr. Elias Zerhouni, Director of the National Institutes of Health noted last month, "From my standpoint, it is clear today that American science will be better-served, and the nation will be better-served, if we let our scientists have access to more stem cell lines."

BIO is the national trade association representing more than 1,100 biotechnology companies, academic institutions, state biotechnology centers and related organizations in all 50 U.S. states and 31 foreign nations. BIO members are involved in the research and development of health-care, agricultural, industrial and environmental biotechnology products.

Our nation's top scientists agree that embryonic stem cell research has the potential to lead to cures and treatments for many of our society's most devastating diseases and disabilities such as cancer, diabetes, ALS, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, and spinal cord injuries. Embryonic stem cell research will further the development of cell-based therapies by leading to greater scientific understanding of cell differentiation – the process by which our cells become specialized to perform certain functions – and proliferation – the process where cells expand, or multiply for controlled use as a potential therapeutic.



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A recent paper reported on very promising research using stem cells drawn from amniotic fluid. While BIO is optimistic about these findings, the results have not yet been replicated. This work should not be seen as a substitute for the embryonic stem cell research authorized by S. 5. The ability of pluripotent embryonic stem cells to create specialized cells throughout the body has already been proven in laboratories across the world.

Importantly, S. 5 creates an ethical framework for this research. It prohibits funding unless the cell lines were derived from excess embryos from in vitro fertilization clinics that were created for reproductive purposes and would otherwise be discarded. It also requires voluntary informed consent from the couples donating the excess embryos and prohibits any financial inducements.

While all stem cell research is important, our nation's scientific leaders agree that S. 5 provides the best hope to millions of patients and their families by expanding current federal policy regarding federal funding of stem cell research. I urge you to support its passage.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me or Brent Del Monte, BIO's Vice President for Federal Government Relations, at 202-962-9200.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



James C. Greenwood
President & CEO