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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the House of Representatives
FROM: Representative Babette Josephs
DATE: May 4, 2011
SUBJECT: Request for Co-Sponsorship: State Funding of Stem Cell Research

On March 9 of 2009, President Obama lifted an eight year ban on funding for embryonic stem cell research. Removing the restrictions placed on federal financing by the Bush administration should have enabled researchers to use federal money to work with hundreds of stem cell lines.

However, opponents of stem cell research filed suit, *Sherley v. Sebelius*, stating that lifting the ban violated the Dickey-Wicker amendment – a 1997 amendment to a Health and Human Services (HHS) appropriations bill that forbade the use of federal funds in research that either created or destroyed a human embryo. A temporary ban on use of federal money was instituted.

On April 29th, the US Federal Appeals Court removed that ban, handing down a decision that overturns the Dickey-Wicker amendment as “ambiguous” in that it forbids research using embryonic stem cells only when destructive acts are used to such cells, but that it does not forbid such support for research on existing stem cell lines. Currently, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, New Jersey and New York fund stem cell research.

The ruling now enables scientists to integrate research from various funding sources, the better to address the causes of and therapies for widespread and intractable diseases and conditions, among them Parkinson’s disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig’s disease), spinal cord injuries, heart disease, diabetes, and arthritis and burns, to name a few.

I will soon reintroduce legislation to authorize the use of state dollars for embryonic stem cell research. This proposal would allow Pennsylvania researchers to use public funds to work with the hundreds of stem cell lines that have been created for the purpose of developing new medical treatments.

If you are interested in co-sponsoring this legislation, you may contact Jennifer Belz in my Harrisburg office at (717) 787-8529 or via e-mail at jbelz@pahouse.net. Thank you.