

## **Testimony regarding Senate Bills 564 and 565**

### **Senate Oversight**

**Position: Oppose**

**February 11, 2016**

Senate Bill's 564 and 565, which seek to criminalize reimbursement for the costs associated with donation of fetal tissue, are unwise. As academics at Wayne State University School of Medicine, we have grave concerns about legislative proposals, such as these, that seek to restrict the use of fetal tissue research.

In the last few months, the use of fetal tissue has become a lightning rod for media attention and needless controversy. It is well-established that research using fetal tissue has led to transformative breakthroughs and that it holds promise for future advancements in medicine. We offer our support for the patients, physicians, and researchers that contribute to this vital work, and we call on policymakers to reject attempts to politicize it.

From therapies for end-stage breast cancer, diabetes, and Parkinson's disease to a promising vaccine for Ebola, vital medical research depends on continued use of fetal tissue under current laws and regulations. Fetal tissue continues to be an important resource for biomedical research. Since the 1930s fetal tissue has been used in a broad range of research that has led to lifesaving discoveries. In the past, human fetal tissue research has been critical in establishing permanent cell lines for use in vaccine research for diseases such as polio, hepatitis A, measles, mumps, rubella, chickenpox, and rabies. Legislative proposals that restrict research from cells already developed from fetal tissue and/or restrict scientists' access to new tissue would have serious downstream consequences.

The current legal and ethical rules enforced for fetal tissue donation are similar in many respects to the ethics of organ donation. The ability to donate fetal tissue for medical research is not linked to an increase in the number of abortions practices. Nor can we reasonably expect a limitation on fetal tissue donation or research to reduce the number of abortions. Rather, it will prevent the use of tissue that would otherwise be destroyed, hindering efforts to better understand, diagnose, and treat diseases life-threatening diseases.

We understand and share some of the concerns that have been raised in response to recent headlines, and our institution endorses strong ethical practices that will address these concerns without impeding future research. We *oppose* any efforts to profit from the sale or distribution of human fetal tissue. Additionally, we embrace the best ethical practices that separate the decision to have an abortion from the decisions to donate tissue for research.

As physicians and scientists, we work every day to save and improve lives. We urge lawmakers to support our ability to continue this important work by rejecting Senate Bills 564 and 565.

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