



CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE FOR REGENERATIVE MEDICINE

August 5, 2005

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Constitution Ave. & 2nd St., NE
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Constitution Ave. & 2nd St., NE
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Feinstein and Boxer:

Today at the governing board meeting of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), the Independent Citizens Oversight Committee unanimously voiced its opposition to any attempt to prohibit the process of somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT); this is a vital tool in the development of stem cell therapies. The board, however, is also unanimous in our opposition to human *reproductive* cloning.

Somatic cell nuclear transfer is a proven technology that enables the creation of new patient-specific stem cells and disease-specific stem cells. With these building blocks, we have the potential to replace damaged or dead tissue in order to develop therapies for devastating diseases and injuries. Proposition 71, passed in November 2004 by over 59 percent of California voters, earmarks funds for stem cell research, including research on patient-specific stem cell lines, with the highest ethical and medical safeguards and standards.

The board voted unanimously to oppose S. 658 (Brownback) and its House counterpart, H.R. 1357 (Weldon), measures that would prohibit critical somatic cell nuclear transfer. The ICOC also unanimously voted to support S. 1520 (Feinstein/Hatch), a newly introduced bill that would ban human reproductive cloning. Previously, the board voted to support H.R. 810 (Castle/DeGette) and S. 471 (Specter/Harkin) bills to expand the number of stem cell lines eligible for federal funding.

The board's position is consistent with Proposition 71, the initiative that launched CIRM, which expressly amended the California Constitution to prohibit funding for human reproductive cloning. Moreover, every responsible scientist supports a ban on human reproductive cloning.

The board opposes S. 658 because it would have devastating consequences and would significantly impede the advancement of medical science. Should it become law, S. 658 would severely undercut our research funding program in California, and therefore significantly set back scientific research for stem cell treatments around the world. SCNT is important for developing patient-specific therapies, understanding the origins and progress of disease, potentially reducing drug testing costs, and for reducing risks in human clinical trials.

The ICOC supports the more narrowly focused S. 1520 because it is targeted to ban human reproductive cloning but does not prohibit SCNT. This is an important distinction. The Feinstein-Hatch anti-cloning bill would make it a federal crime to clone or attempt to clone a human being. The measure calls for a penalty of up to 10 years in prison for cloning or attempting to clone a human being, as well as fines of up to \$1 million.

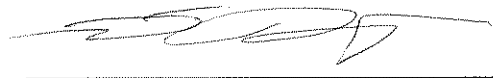
Millions of patients suffering from devastating chronic disease and injury and their families support the pursuit of ethical embryonic stem cell research. Congress should not interfere with this science. Any serious roadblock such as a prohibition on research involving disease-specific stem cell lines would constitute its own ethical transgression.

Somatic cell nuclear transfer is a critical technology that offers the hope of cure to suffering millions. It is vital that scientists are allowed to use it to investigate new treatments.

Sincerely,



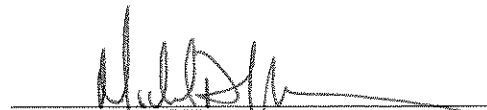
Robert Klein
Chairman, ICOC



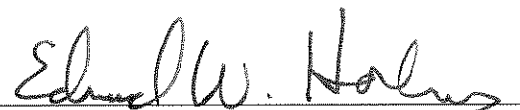
Ed Penhoet, PhD
Vice Chairman, ICOC



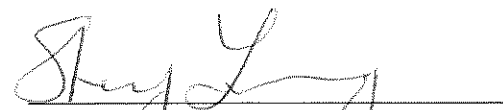
Susan V. Bryant, PhD
Member, ICOC
Representative from UC Medical School



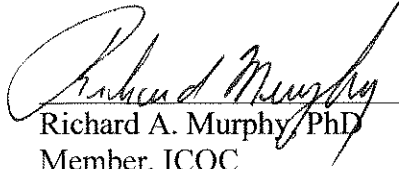
Michael D. Goldberg
Member, ICOC
Representative of Commercial Life
Science Entity



Edward W. Holmes, MD
Member, ICOC
Representative from UC Medical School



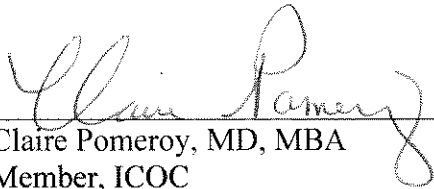
Sherry Lansing
Member, ICOC
Patient Advocate (Cancer)



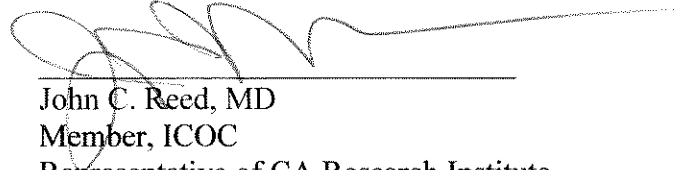
Richard A. Murphy, PhD
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Representative of California Research Institute



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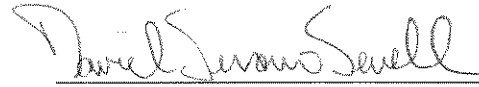
Claire Pomeroy, MD, MBA
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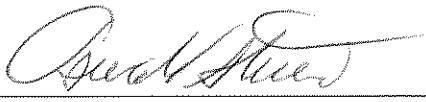
John C. Reed, MD
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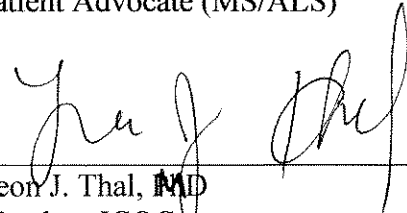
Joan Samuelson, JD
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Patient Advocate (Parkinson's Disease)



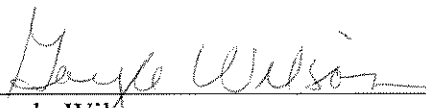
David Serrano Sewell, JD
Member, ICOC
Patient Advocate (MS/ALS)



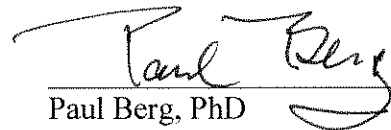
Oswald Steward, PhD
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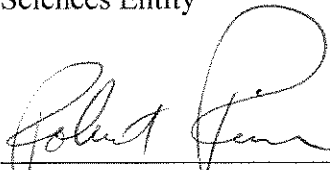
Leon J. Thal, MD
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Patient Advocate (Alzheimer's Disease)



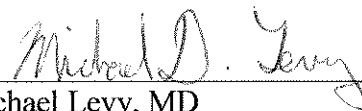
Gayle Wilson
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