



**Wednesday, December 14, 2011**

**HB171 HUMAN CLONING (THOMPSON A, JOHNSON T)** To prohibit human cloning, the creation, transportation, or receipt of a human-animal hybrid, the transfer of a nonhuman embryo into a human womb, and the transfer of a human embryo into a nonhuman womb.

Paula Westwood, executive director of Right to Life of Greater Cincinnati, and Dr. Dennis Sullivan, professor of biology and director of the Center for Bioethics at Cedarville University, testified in support of HB171. David Prentice, senior fellow for life sciences for Family Research Council, submitted written proponent testimony.

Opponent testimony was given by Dr. Douglas Kniss, professor of obstetrics and gynecology, biomedical engineering and pediatrics at Ohio State University.

Westwood said reproductive cloning "with humans has been nearly universally condemned up to now, but whether this will remain out of bounds is no longer sure." She said HB171 "sets a state-level precedent to ban human-animal genetic experimentation."

Citing reports of 155 human-animal hybrids secretly grown in British laboratories over the past three years, Prentice wrote, "It is time to place reasonable boundaries around human experimentation. There are no valid or compelling grounds -- ethical, scientific or medical -- to allow [somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT)] cloning of human embryos for any purpose, nor for production of animal-human hybrids."

Kniss said compromises negotiated by OSU and other research organizations to allow them to reach a position of neutrality on 128-SB243 and 127-SB174 over nearly six years are not incorporated in HB171. "Unintended negative consequences outweigh the noble intent of the bill," said Kniss. He said the bill would potentially deny Ohio citizens from receiving the state-of-the-art treatments for any number of human diseases (e.g., juvenile diabetes, Parkinson's, Huntington's, Alzheimer's and cardiovascular diseases); have a chilling effect on the ability of major medical centers and research universities in Ohio to recruit innovative and entrepreneurial scientists and their teams to the state for fear of criminal prosecution and public ridicule of their biomedical research; create disadvantages for biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies who desire to relocate to or start up in Ohio; and criminalize the conduct of innovative research involving the formation of novel pluripotent stem cell lines using somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT) and their testing.

"Many elements of the bill seek to legislate what is scientifically implausible," said Kniss. The bill also raises questions about Ohio researchers involved in out-of-state and out-of-country collaborations. "From a practical point of view," he said, "HB171 will be essentially impossible to enforce... potentially compromise intellectual property positions and even patient confidentiality... would cost Ohio taxpayers millions of dollars per year for the creation of 'watch dog' agencies within the state government and at universities."

Rep. Garland said the bill "sounds like an anti-jobs bill." Rep. Carney suggested that the bill

sponsor, Rep. Johnson, meet with Kniss to change the bill; Johnson responded that a meeting "is in the works."

Sullivan said, "There can be no moral or scientific basis for human cloning for any purpose, and there is no ethical or research justification for animal-human hybrids. The costs are just too great for human flourishing and for the dignity of humankind."

Sullivan said there is really no difference between "reproductive" and "therapeutic" cloning; "If possible," he said, "the term 'research cloning' would be more accurate to the facts." He defined human cloning as SCNT which can be carried out by removing or inactivating the nucleus of a donated human egg and replacing it with a fully developed diploid cell from an adult. Sullivan then noted that cloning is completely unnecessary for producing human organs following the Nov. 20, 2007 announcement of the successful production of iPS cells (induced pluripotent stem cells) from genetically altered human skin cells by separate teams of researchers in Japan and Wisconsin.

Sullivan expressed deep concern about the growing exploitation of women induced to undergo dangerous and invasive procedures, from which they will gain no direct health benefit, simply to provide the thousands of human eggs necessary for experimentation. The creation of animal-human hybrids, said Sullivan, "should never be produced" because "it blurs the distinction between human beings and other animals; it violates human dignity; human embryos have a special moral status, and this violates their rights; the research has little scientific value; and mixing animal and human genetic material in this way runs the risk of creating new and potentially untreatable disease.

Sullivan said he does not think the bill supporters and Dr. Kniss are that far apart. Chairman Wachtmann said, "I support the core of the bill, and will work with the parties on a compromise." Sullivan suggested "a joint statement from the parties as a vote of confidence."