

Pro-Life Wisconsin



Defending them all...

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Testimony in support of AB 499 / SB 243:
Comprehensive Human Cloning Ban
Assembly Children and Families Committee / Senate Judiciary, Corrections
and Privacy Committee
By Matt Sande, Director of Legislative Affairs

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Good afternoon Chairman Kestell, Chairman Zien, and committee members. Pro-Life Wisconsin appreciates the opportunity to express our strong support for Assembly Bill (AB) 499 and Senate Bill (SB) 243, companion legislation that has been carefully crafted to ban all forms of human cloning – including parthenogenesis. Cloning perverts God’s design for creating new life. In cloning, a child is not created; a new life is simply manufactured. A child becomes a product, and a product is never considered equal to its producer. In short, cloning is a perverse mode of generating a human life that affronts the dignity, equality and freedom of that human life at its very beginning.

Before discussing the ethical and public policy issues surrounding the creation of human embryos through cloning, we must answer the *scientific* question of what these early human embryos are. *When does human life begin?** **Human embryologists** – the real scientific experts in the area of human development – authoritatively conclude that a human embryo is a human being, immediately beginning at fertilization or cloning. At no other logical or scientifically sound point can we say that human life begins.** The embryo is not an organ or some pre-human cellular glob without purpose or plan. Embryologists categorically reject the notion of a “pre-embryo” or some form of evolving “human-being-on-the-way.” From its inception, the embryo contains its entire genetic makeup and needs only time to grow and develop into a recognizable human person.

AB 499 and SB 243 ban so-called “reproductive cloning,” where a cloned human embryo is brought to birth, and so-called “therapeutic cloning,” where a cloned human embryo is experimented upon and killed in the name of scientific progress. The terminology is, of course, problematic because it implies that there is a difference between “reproductive” and

***“At the moment the sperm cell of the human male meets the ovum of the female and the union results in a fertilized ovum (zygote), a new life has begun.”** Considine, Douglas (ed.). *Van Nostrand’s Scientific Encyclopedia*. 5th edition. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1976, p. 943.

****Ronan O’Rahilly** is one of the international “deans” of human embryology and the developer of the *“Carnegie Stages of Early Human Development,”* which classify human embryology. He sits on the international board (**Nomina Embryologica**), which determines the terminology to be used in this field. In his book, the leading text on human embryology, he confirms that human life begins at fertilization and repudiates the term “pre-embryo” as scientifically ill-defined, equivocal, unjustified and politically motivated.

“therapeutic” cloning. But the distinction between the two is illusory, and it is intentionally misleading. **Both involve the reproduction of a fully human life.** Once the nucleus of a somatic cell is injected into an empty egg and stimulated to begin development, it is a human embryo. The difference lies in the intended use of that human embryo – whether it is to be implanted

in the womb and brought to birth (reproductive cloning) or whether it is to be eviscerated by extracting its stem cells (therapeutic cloning). Either intention is repugnant, in that the dignity and individuality of the human person is thoroughly disregarded.

The primary argument against “reproductive” cloning is straightforward and widely shared – it is dangerous. Cloning is an assault on human life, both physically and psychologically. It carries “massive risks of producing unhealthy, abnormal and malformed children,” according to Dr. Leon Kass, chairman of the President’s Council on Bioethics. Most cloned sheep embryos have died soon after being produced (during gestation or soon after birth) due to congenital disorders. The report of the one successfully cloned sheep in Scotland was preceded by 277 failures. One can reasonably expect that similar results would hold true for humans. Producing a child of known genetic makeup implies conditional parental acceptance, which is harmful to a child’s social and psychological development.

The primary argument against “therapeutic” cloning is also straightforward but less widely shared – it intentionally kills another human being. Supporters of “therapeutic” cloning often say that they support cloning only to “produce stem cells,” evading the fact that they must create and then destroy fully human embryos to produce those stem cells. “Therapeutic cloning” is really just the opposite, because it involves nontherapeutic experiments on a defenseless human being – experiments that kill the human being solely for the benefit of others.

Banning only so-called “reproductive cloning” would allow “therapeutic cloning” to proceed with impunity. In fact, by prohibiting the placement of cloned human embryos in wombs (natural or artificial), **a ban on only reproductive cloning would necessarily mandate that all cloned human embryos be destroyed. That is why it is referred to as “clone to kill.”** Such a ban would create a new crime: the crime of trying to “initiate a pregnancy” with a cloned human embryo. Will the law then mandate an abortion, the destruction of a born child, or imprisonment of the mother and/or child? The only thing that an exclusive ban on reproductive cloning would ban is the survival of persons created by cloning. It is worse than doing nothing at all.

Therapeutic cloning will pave the way for reproductive cloning, realizing our worst fears. President Bush has warned that it will be next to impossible to prevent multitudes of cloned human embryos from being implanted in wombs. According to the President, “Once cloned embryos (are) available, implantation would take place. Even the tightest regulations and strict policing would not prevent or detect the birth of cloned babies.” The U.S. Department of Justice has declared that a prohibition on transferring cloned human embryos into wombs would be unenforceable.

Often overlooked is the negative impact therapeutic cloning would have on women’s health and dignity. It would require countless numbers of women to donate their eggs through a painful and dangerous extraction process, and it would turn women into human egg factories to be commercially exploited.

Concerning women’s health, the use of superovulatory drugs and the invasive egg extraction procedure are linked to grave health risks: severe pelvic pain, nausea, rupture of the ovaries, bleeding into the abdominal cavity, respiratory problems, liver dysfunction, blocking of blood vessels by blood clots, and on rare occasions surgery may be required which may leave a patient infertile.*

Concerning women’s dignity, research cloning commodifies women by creating a massive market of female eggs that women would produce solely for monetary compensation. The trafficking of female body parts for cloning is a natural result, as is the victimization of marginalized women. Scientists have acknowledged that treating just one major disease, such as diabetes, would require up to 800 million eggs harvested from about 80 million women. Research cloning would undoubtedly initiate a new exploitation of women, especially those of low socioeconomic status.

To be sure, **a ban on human cloning will not hinder lifesaving medical research in Wisconsin.** AB 499 and SB 243 allow stem cell research. Ethically unproblematic adult stem cells have helped hundreds of thousands of patients, and new clinical uses are discovered almost weekly. Adult stem cells have already been

used to treat cancers, restore vision, repair damaged spinal cords, and treat juvenile diabetes and Parkinson's disease.

Pro-Life Wisconsin is proud to continue our work with Representative Kestell and Senator Leibham on this critical legislation. We too want to see research move forward in the hopes of discovering treatments for disease, and we *can* move forward ethically so long as we do not create life simply to kill it for the benefit of others. **Wisconsinites deserve the assurance that their state can build on its lead in biotechnology without compromising its bioethics.**

I urge the committees to recommend adoption of AB 499 and SB 243, and I would like to conclude with a quote from President Bush that, in my opinion, sums up the debate:

“Advances in biomedical technology must never come at the expense of human conscience. As we seek what is possible, we must always ask what is right, and we must not forget that even the most noble ends do not justify any means...Research cloning would contradict the most fundamental principle of medical ethics, that no human life should be exploited or extinguished for the benefit of another.”

Remarks by the President on Human Cloning Legislation, April 10, 2002.

*(FDA TAP Holdings, September 12, 1996; September 4, 1997; “Lupron and Synarel Patient Information,” *Specialists in Reproductive Medicine and Surgery*, P.A., 2001; FDA, Review of Lupron 1999.)