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NEWS

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State's New Cloning Policy Will Exploit Women

On Thursday, June 11, the Empire State Stem Cell Board, which is charged with overseeing \$600 million in state taxpayer funds for stem cell research, is expected to recommend that state funds be paid to women who allow for the extraction of their eggs for research purposes. Kathleen M. Gallagher, director of pro-life activities for the New York State Catholic Conference, made the following statement:

“The New York State Stem Cell Board is poised to facilitate the exploitation of low-income women by using taxpayer funds to pay for the retrieval of eggs. This is a grossly unethical, dangerous and exploitative move that treats women’s body parts as commodities. It must be rejected. If the Stem Cell Board itself moves forward with this proposal, then the state Legislature must act to prevent it.

“No other state in the union allows eggs-for-research payments, and for good reason. The Board is considering up to \$10,000 per retrieval, which, in the current economic climate, will induce low-income women who are struggling to put food on their table to undergo this painful and dangerous procedure. Such women face serious health risks and loss of fertility. Vulnerable women should not be coerced into risking their health and their lives for speculative science with speculative benefits.

“A compelling case cannot even be made that the medical benefits somehow mitigate the ethical lapse. Scientists are seeking these eggs to clone human embryos, which will be subsequently destroyed for their stem cells. Yet the science of stem cell research is moving in the opposite direction, toward research involving adult stem cells and the reprogramming of ordinary skin cells to act identical to embryonic cells. This type of research bears none of the ethical burdens of embryonic research.

“Payments to women for the extraction of their eggs crosses an ethical line that New Yorkers should not be forced to finance. Regardless of one’s position on embryonic stem cell research, we can all agree that women should not be exploited by researchers, with state approval. The Legislature should step in now to ban payments for eggs.”

The Catholic Conference represents New York State’s Bishops in matters of public policy.