

*Improving the Quality of Health Care:
Advancing the Pace of Discovery in Stem Cell Research*

Introduction

As a result of the determined leadership of the General Assembly and the effective advocacy of groups like Maryland Families for Stem Cell Research lead by former Governor Harry Hughes, Maryland has positioned itself at the forefront of national efforts to advance and realize the benefits of stem cell research. All told, nearly 130 million Americans, including hundreds of thousands of Marylanders, suffer from diseases and injuries such as Parkinson's, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's, cystic fibrosis, MS, ALS, rheumatoid arthritis, HIV/AIDS and injuries like spinal cord injuries and severe burns where stem cell research offers the hopeful promise of new treatments and cures.

Unfortunately, despite broad bi-partisan public support for stem cell research, Maryland's national leadership on this issue has come in spite of the Bush Administration's obstinance and the Ehrlich Administration's reticence. Indeed, George W. Bush recently exercised his first ever veto on legislation providing for important stem cell research. Similarly, after initially opposing legislative efforts in Annapolis, the Ehrlich Administration has tried to co-opt stem cells and claim leadership on this issue. This is despite a record that includes two of the Governor's Cabinet Secretaries, including his now Chief of Staff, speaking out in opposition to past legislative efforts, a complete lack of advocacy on behalf of the cause, and finally delayed appointments to the legislatively mandated Maryland Stem Cell Research Commission, the group charged with appointing an independent scientific peer review committee to review, evaluate, rank and rate research proposals eligible for State-funded stem cell research.

Martin O'Malley and Anthony Brown know that if Maryland is to build on its leadership on stem cell research the State must make sustained investments in this emerging field of study and position Maryland's leading medical research institutions and bio-technology industry to be at the national forefront of these efforts. Maryland can and must do better.

Improving Quality of Care: Accelerate the Pace of Discovery

- **Increase the state's stem cell research funding.** While the Maryland Stem Cell Research Commission has yet to even appoint an independent scientific peer review committee to review, evaluate, rank and rate research proposals eligible for State-funded stem cell research, it is critical that the public and industry observers know that Maryland's commitment to this groundbreaking field of work is unwavering and

will be sustained. For perspective, states such as California have shown a willingness to embark on a 10-year, \$3 billion commitment to state-funded research.

Martin O'Malley and Anthony Brown will make continued State funding of stem cell research a priority in upcoming budget cycles. While it is unlikely that projects funded from the FY2007 budget will be sufficiently developed for evaluation, an O'Malley-Brown administration will work with the General Assembly to increase funding in the FY2008 budget to \$25 million.

- **Accelerate implementation of the stem cell research grant funding.** The state has delayed discovery too long because of politics. Our families cannot afford to lose any more time to bureaucracy. Martin O' Malley and Anthony Brown call upon the new Commission to quickly adopt rules and regulations for research funding and to set a definitive schedule to rapidly implement the funding of this most important medical research.
- **Establish post-doctorate and graduate fellowships at Maryland's leading institutions.** The long-term viability and success of Maryland's State-funded stem cell research efforts will be dependent upon attracting the nation's and world's best and brightest researchers to Maryland. Martin O'Malley and Anthony Brown propose setting aside \$2 million in matching funds to help post doctorate and graduate fellowships related to stem cell research at Johns Hopkins and the University System of Maryland.
- **Increase public awareness about stem cell issues.** With the leadership of former governor Harry Hughes, Maryland Families for Stem Cell Research (see www.marylandcures.org for additional information) has played a critical role in advocating for State funding for stem cell research. Marshaling constituencies of citizens suffering from debilitating diseases and injuries as well as leading medical researcher and bio-technology industry leaders, this group has brought the issue of State stem cell research funding to the forefront for Marylanders helping legislative leaders, such as Speaker Busch, Senator Hollinger, Delegates Hammen and Rosenberg, to overcome the resistance of the Ehrlich Administration's and the majority of the Republican legislative caucus.

While the stem cell legislation that passed the 2006 General Assembly session does call for the Maryland Stem Cell Research Commission to annually report to the Governor and Legislature on the progress of state-funded research, including the specific identification of grantees, award amounts, and descriptions of the type of stem cell research being conducted, more must be done to educate the public about stem cell research, keep them informed of developments in the field, and report on the tangible progress of State-funded initiatives. In addition to the legislatively mandated reporting to State government, Martin O'Malley and Anthony Brown will call for the Maryland Stem Cell Research Commission to hold public educational forums around the state to better inform and educate the public on stem cell research and the progress of State-funded efforts.

- **Aggressively Attract Investment to Maryland's Bio-Tech Industry.** In addition to the promise of new treatments and cures, stem cell research has the potential to be an engine for economic growth in Maryland spurring the creation of new start-up companies and expanding the state's already burgeoning biotechnology industry.

A 2005 economic impact study by the Sage Policy Group concluded that State funding of stem cell research would minimally produce almost a 2-to-1 return on investment under the strictest assumptions, producing nearly 3,000 jobs and over \$150 million in income over the first five years. An O'Malley/Brown Administration will work to aggressively work to attract investment in our biotech industry that will create jobs and save lives.

“the competitive, economic and fiscal benefits that would accompany State funding of stem cell research would be substantial. Under the strictest assumptions, the fiscal return to the State's investments would be 194 percent. In other words, the competitive, economic and fiscal opportunity costs of not funding this research would be enormous.”

Sage Policy Group