SENATE BILL REPORT
SB 5466

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, March 5, 2003

Title: An act relating to stem cell research and human cloning.

Brief Description: Regulating stem cell research and human cloning.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Reardon and Finkbeiner.

Brief History:
Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 3/5/03 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5466 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Deccio, Chair; Winsley, Vice Chair; Brandland, Keiser and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Tanya Karwaki (786-7447)

Background: Stem cells have the ability to develop into many different cell types. Unlike other types of cells, stem cells are unspecialized, capable of dividing and renewing themselves for long periods, and can be induced to become cells with special functions, such as muscle cells, red blood cells, or brain cells. Current research using stem cells pertains to diabetes, Parkinson's disease, heart disease, and spinal cord injury.

Cloning is a process by which a genetically identical organism is created by asexual reproduction, i.e., without the fertilization of an egg by a sperm. Sheep, cows, cats, and mice have all been cloned successfully. The procedure used to create a clone is called somatic cell nuclear transfer, or nuclear transplantation. By transplanting the nucleus from an adult body (somatic) cell into an oocyte that has had its nucleus removed or inactivated, a genetically identical animal may be created.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The policy of Washington State is declared to permit research involving the use of human embryonic stem cells, human embryonic germ cells, and human adult stem cells upon full consideration of the ethical and medical implications.

Health care providers that deliver fertility treatment must provide patients with adequate information to make an informed choice regarding the disposition of unused human embryos. Patients must be given four options for disposing of unused embryos: storing them; donating them to another individual; discarding them; or donating them for research. Before donating any unused embryos for research, the patient must provide written consent.

Donating human embryonic tissue or human cadaveric fetal tissue for research is permitted. The sale of such tissues is a felony.

Cloning or attempting to clone a human being is prohibited and carries a civil penalty of one million dollars for each violation.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill increases the civil penalty for cloning or attempting to clone a human being from $100,000 to $1 million for each violation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: California has passed a similar bill and New Jersey has one pending in the Legislature. Stem cell research has the potential to help millions of Americans with diseases such as Diabetes and Parkinson's disease. Washington has a thriving biotechnology industry and this bill will help contribute to the economy as well as increase available medical treatments. This bill would allow privately funded research with stem cells to occur in the state.

Testimony Against: Life begins at conception. There are two problems with this bill: 1) human cloning is not properly defined; 2) the sources of stem cells that are allowed by this bill include human embryonic cells, which are derived from human embryos.

Testified: PRO: Pat Kessler, Diabetes; Jim Rambaldini, JDRF; Hans Wold, Northwest Hereditary Disease Foundation; LaVonne Goodman, HD HDSA; CON: Bob Higley, WERG; Sharon Quick, MD; Kevin Glackin-Coley, WSCC.