

House Committee holds first public hearing of stem-cell bill

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Rep. Larry Galizio and Rep. Mitch Greenlick speak about economic benefit of research

SALEM, Ore. â€“ The House Sustainability and Economic Development Committee, chaired by Representative Tobias Read (D-Beaverton) heard testimony this week on HB 2598. The bill, sponsored by Representative Larry Galizio (D-Tigard), would jump-start stem cell research in Oregon. Representative Galizio and Representative Mitch Greenlick (D-Portland) testified, saying that now is the time to consider future economic development opportunities.

"Even though the recession is understandably dominating this legislative session," said Galizio. "We should acknowledge that eventually our economy will rebound. We need to be planning for that time now, and do what we can to ensure that Oregon is poised to take advantage of the economic opportunities of the future - like advanced bio-medical research."

Both Legislators noted that several states have already authorized funding for comprehensive stem cell research, including California, New Jersey, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland and New York. They argued that stem cell research is an important investment not only in the future of medicine, but also in the future of scientific research in Oregon.

"Even if we fail to act, stem-cell research will happen," said Greenlick. "It will happen in Boston, Austin and Palo Alto - Oregon would be left behind."

House Bill 2598 will speed the development of stem cell research in Oregon, while ensuring that this research is consistent with our shared values. House Bill 2598 does three things:

First, the bill creates a Stem Cell Research Committee made up of scientists, medical ethicists and members of the public. This committee will examine the legal and ethical issues related to stem-cell research and develop guidelines for research conducted in Oregon. Second, the bill creates the Stem Cell Research Grant Fund in the Department of Human Services and authorizes private and public contributions to help speed stem-cell research in Oregon. Finally, the bill specifically outlaws human cloning in Oregon, recognizing that some activities are simply contrary to our shared values.

Members of the committee heard testimony from researchers, and people who have been personally affected by debilitating diseases, who urged the Legislature to help encourage stem cell research in Oregon.

"I'm excited by the possibility that Oregon might play a role in advancing the type of research that builds our economy and has the potential to alleviate suffering and address debilitating diseases," said Read. "I'm especially pleased that we are looking at ways to do this in an ethical and responsible way."

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