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<<MP>>
House of Commons
London SW1A 0PW

19th March 2008

Dear <<MP>>

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill Second Reading

We are writing to you before the Second Reading of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill to emphasise the importance of its provisions to the many patients and their families represented by our organisations. We urge you to support the research provisions in the Bill for the reasons set out below.

The Bill will allow new avenues of scientific inquiry to be pursued which could greatly increase our understanding of serious medical conditions affecting millions of people throughout the UK, and ultimately lead to new treatments, at a time when such work is being significantly hampered by a shortage of donated human eggs available for medical research.

The substance of the Bill has been the subject of much discussion and the Joint Committee on the Bill explored in depth the difficult scientific and ethical issues it raises. It was clear to the Committee that this type of research, under strictly regulated conditions, offered considerable potential benefits to future patients and had much public support. Many of the Committee's recommendations have been incorporated into the legislation.

As we wrote to the Prime Minister in March 2007 when the legislation was being drafted, the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) and Genetic Interest Group (GIG) - including the undersigned organisations - are committed to ensuring that well-regulated, carefully planned and high-quality work for patient benefit is encouraged, in a climate of ongoing public engagement and understanding.

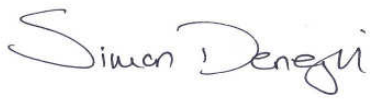
We of course respect and acknowledge the sensitive feelings that surround this issue. However, public understanding of the importance of the use of early stage embryos and ensuing stem cell research remains robust; there is a real acknowledgement of its potential for those who are ill. Recent surveys by MORI and HFEA in 2003 and 2007 respectively, showed that the vast majority of the British public – 70% and 79% - support the use of human embryos for medical research to find treatments for serious diseases and for fertility research.

It is for these reasons, which come in large part from our first-hand knowledge of the diseases and conditions that might benefit from this research, that we urge you to support this Bill.

There is a strong consensus on this within our respective organizations, and among our members. Patient benefit and the alleviation of human suffering is our ultimate aim, this is why we strongly support this legislation.

We will of course be happy to provide briefings on specific amendments to the Bill and would be happy to answer any questions you may have or provide further information if you so wish.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Denegri
Director
Association of Medical
Research Charities



Alastair Kent
Director
Genetic Interest Group

These organisations have expressly requested that their signature be put to this letter:



Jeremy Hughes
Chief Executive Breakthrough Breast Cancer



Professor Peter Weissberg MD FMedSci
Medical Director British Heart Foundation



Harpal S. Kumar
Chief Executive Cancer Research UK



Phil Butcher
Chief Executive Muscular Dystrophy Campaign



Steve Ford
Chief Executive Parkinson's Disease Society