



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

HB 288

Relating to Human Stem Cell Research

Testimony Presented Before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

February 17, 2005

by

T. Samuel Shomaker, M.D., J.D.
Acting Dean, John A. Burns School of Medicine
University of Hawai'i at Manoa

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Thursday, February 17, 2005
State Capitol, Conference Room 329, 9:00 a.m.

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Chair Arakaki, Vice Chair Green, and Committee members.

My name is T. Samuel Shomaker, M.D., J.D., I am the Acting Dean for the John A. Burns School of Medicine and I am testifying in support of HB 288.

Human embryonic stem cell research currently holds the best promise for the potential cures for many significant diseases. These cells are unique in the human body in that they have the potential to transform into any type of human tissue. The host of diseases that result from the body losing one particular tissue, including diabetes, kidney failure, and many others, could be cured by this research. While it is important to emphasize that the results from this research are years in the future, it is also important to note that any such research is significantly impeded in this country by the federal ban on providing federal research funds for this research.

Hawaii is uniquely suited to perform this type of research because one of its most renowned researchers, National Academy of Sciences member Professor Ryuzo Yanagimachi, developed many of the techniques used in this research over the past 40 years, including cloning. All of this work was performed here in Hawaii at the John A. Burns School of Medicine. Dr. Yanagimachi founded the Institute for Biogenesis Research (IBR), a major laboratory devoted to the science of reproductive biology. He and his colleagues are highly experienced and uniquely capable of conducting this type of research.

Many states in the union are making decisions either for or against human embryonic stem cell research. While this promising medical research will never be a reality until funds are made available by the legislature, this bill is a good first step towards laying the foundation for this research in Hawaii. It advocates allowing stem cell research to go forward with due consideration of the ethical concerns and with appropriate safeguards. The next step will be for the legislature to consider an appropriate mechanism for funding this research so that the state's citizens have the opportunity to benefit from the promise of stem cell science.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.