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February 23, 1999

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Rockefeller University
1230 York Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Josh:

Many of you responded to the American Society for Cell Biology's request for endorsement of the Society's position on human cloning. That support was extremely influential in defeating legislation that would have compromised the progress of biomedical research.

The controversy has now advanced to the question of human stem cell research. The Department of Health & Human Services has ruled that research on derivative stem cells by a scientist supported by the federal funds is permissible under the current legislative ban on embryo research. In response, 71 members of the House sent a letter to Health & Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala challenging the ruling and proposing that stem cell research be prohibited under the embryo research ban.

The ASCB is seeking to persuade Congress and the Administration to acknowledge the distinction between "embryo" and "stem cell" research and to explicitly exempt stem cell research from the prohibition on the use of federal funds to support embryo research.

To this end, we seek your signature on the attached letter. Please return the enclosed form as soon as possible but no later than Wednesday, March 3, at 12:00 noon Eastern Standard Time.

Thank you for your continued and immediate consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Paul Berg, Ph.D.
Cahill Professor of Cancer Research
Director of the Beckman Center for Molecular & Genetic Medicine
Stanford University
Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, 1980
Chair, ASCB Public Policy Committee

Enclosures

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