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OCTOBER 14, 2015

OPEN LETTER TO CONGRESS

Stop Politics from Interfering with Science and Research

As scientists committed to improving the health of all people, the undersigned reaffirm our belief that politics has no place in important discussions about research and its role in advancing treatments and cures for diseases and conditions that harm people every day.¹ In the last few months, the use of fetal tissue in research has become a lightning rod for media attention and needless controversy. It is well-established that research using fetal tissue has led to transformative breakthroughs and that it holds promise for future advancements in medicine. We offer our support for the patients, physicians, and researchers that contribute to this vital work, and we call on policymakers to reject attempts to politicize it.

Fetal tissue research has been conducted legally and ethically in the United States for decades. In that time, it has been the catalyst for major medical and scientific discoveries, including the polio, rubella, and hepatitis vaccines. Quite simply: this research has saved lives. If not for the polio vaccine—developed using fetal kidney cells in the 1950s—UNICEF estimates that the disease would claim 640,000 lives each year.^{2, 3}

Today, the study and use of fetal tissue in medical research gives hope to millions of people and their families affected by a range of diseases and conditions. Fetal tissue is being used to develop treatments for many conditions, including diabetes, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, heart disease, stroke, organ failure, and spinal cord injuries.⁴ It is also used to better understand and prevent maternal and fetal health conditions.

Fetal tissue research has already saved and improved the lives of countless people. As with any research, we strongly believe that programs involving fetal tissue research must uphold the highest ethical and legal standards. But we cannot allow political agendas to undermine our nation's legacy of leadership in medical and scientific innovation.

Sincerely,

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¹ Affiliated institutions are listed for identification purposes only. The views expressed in this letter are of the individual signatories and do not necessarily reflect the views of the affiliated institutions.

² American Society For Cell Biology. (2001). "Talking Points: Fetal Tissue Research." Available at <http://www.ascb.org/newsfiles/fetaltissue.pdf>.

³ UNICEF. "Vaccines bring 7 diseases under control." Available at <http://www.unicef.org/pon96/hevaccin.htm>.

⁴ Boonstra, Heather. (2001). "Human Embryo and Fetal Research: Medical Support and Political Controversy." Guttmacher Report on Public Policy, 4(1): 3-5. Available at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/tgr/04/1/gr040103.html>.