

**Statement to Catholics in the Diocese of Sioux Falls
regarding the possible ballot initiative repealing state laws
prohibiting embryonic stem cell research
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All persons of good will desire and encourage the pursuit of cures for diseases because we care about one another. Catholic health care has long been a leader in seeking cures as well as in treating medical conditions and providing spiritual support for those suffering.

South Dakota has established a thoughtful and ethical approach to such research. There currently is no ban on stem cell research in South Dakota. The state does, however, prohibit embryonic stem cell research. This should not be weakened or repealed.

State laws support and encourage adult stem cell research, as does the Church. Adult stem cell research has already helped thousands of human patients suffering from over 70 different conditions such as heart disease, spinal cord injuries, juvenile diabetes and many cancers. Adult stem cells, whether taken from adult tissues (like skin or bone marrow) or umbilical cord blood, have proven to be versatile and successful, and do not involve serious ethical concerns.

Embryonic stem cell research always involves the destruction of human embryos, human life. Despite the fact that millions of dollars have been spent on embryonic stem cell research in other states, no cures or treatments have been discovered to date. Proponents make the claim that embryonic stem cell research has potential. Yet, a good intention can never justify immoral means. Destroying life for the hypothetical potential that it might benefit others is never ethical.

A human being, no matter their stage of life, ought never to be used as a means to be exploited even for a supposed benefit. The suggestion that as a state we should endorse this moral compromise ought to trouble us all. Who then, unborn or born, is safe from those with power over others?

The taking of innocent human life is a grave moral evil with which we must never cooperate or endorse. To be consistent with this Church teaching, Catholics should not circulate or sign a petition to place it on the ballot. Nor should Catholics vote for it should that effort be successful. A clear understanding of the truth and the practical reality about both embryonic and adult stem cell research makes this apparent.

In summary, current state laws do not limit the vast potential of the already successful adult stem cell research yet place appropriate restrictions on the destruction of human embryos and therefore human life. They should be retained.

Let us all pray and work for the alleviation of suffering and for the discovery of cures for diseases in morally appropriate ways.