

Joint Subcommittee Studying Medical, Ethical, and Scientific Issues Relating to Stem Cell Research

HJR 48

The Joint Subcommittee Studying Medical, Ethical, and Scientific Issues Relating to Stem Cell Research held its third and fourth meetings on November 13, 2006 and November 27, 2006, respectively. The main purpose of these final two meetings was to develop legislation for the 2007 General Assembly session.

November 13 Meeting

The first and only speaker of the day was Dr. David Suttle of the Virginia Department of Health. Dr. Suttle, who was unable to attend the last subcommittee meeting, gave a brief update of the Department of Health's progress in implementing the Virginia Cord Blood Bank Initiative. He mentioned that the consortium of experts developed as a result of HB 413 (2006) would hold their first meeting on December 1. He also spoke of new federal funding possibilities that the consortium would be exploring. He also expressed some concern that language in the Code section establishing the Cord Blood Bank limiting its use to Virginians might limit the sources of funding available. The subcommittee briefly discussed introducing legislation to change this language, but eventually decided to wait and see if the consortium of experts thought this would be necessary.

The rest of the meeting was devoted to developing legislative proposals. The subcommittee came up with three proposals that they would like to see drafted before their final meeting. The first was a continuation of the study for one year, for two meetings only, to continue to monitor the progress of the Cord Blood Bank Initiative and to deal with any emerging stem cell research issues. The second proposal was a resolution encouraging the Department of Health to continue seeking new sources of federal funding, and also to seek support from the Virginia congressional delegation. The final suggestion was a bill requiring insurance providers to cover the costs of umbilical cord blood collection, processing, and storage.

The meeting was adjourned with the agreement that the subcommittee would meet one last time to go over drafts of these three proposals.

November 27 Meeting

The subcommittee's final meeting was limited to a review of the three legislative proposals suggested at the previous meeting. The subcommittee reviewed the drafts prepared by staff, and decided to recommend the two resolutions, one continuing the study for another year, and the other encouraging the Department of Health to seek federal funding for the Cord Blood Bank Initiative, as well as the support of the Virginia congressional delegation. The subcommittee decided not to pursue legislation requiring

insurance carriers to cover the costs associated with umbilical cord blood collection and storage.