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## Press Release: Ethicist and Women Bioethics Leaders Criticize New York Stem Cell Board for Pursuing Cash-for-Eggs Scheme

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 8, 2009

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### Ethicist and Women Bioethics Leaders Criticize New York Stem Cell Board for Pursuing Cash-for-Eggs Scheme

**"Cash-strapped and college-aged women will be exploited by the state in this scheme."**

ALBANY, NY, JUNE 8, 2009 -- New York's Empire State Stem Cell Board (ESSCB) is considering a plan that would pay women to provide human eggs for research purposes.

Bucking a national trend seen in states like California and Massachusetts, which prohibit payment for eggs for research, the ESSCB Ethics Committee voted at its May 12 meeting to recommend that state research funds be provided to researchers who pay women for their eggs, making New York the only state in the union to tacitly endorse a cash-for-eggs scheme. At its upcoming meeting on June 11, the ESSCB will consider providing state money for direct payments to women to try to obtain human eggs for research.

"In a desperate quest and unprecedented measure to obtain women's eggs to create embryos for research purposes, New York will waste taxpayers money on unproven science, and women who take the bait will be risking their health and future fertility," said Fr. Thomas Berg, a member of the ESSCB's Ethics Committee, and Executive Director of the Westchester Institute, a Catholic think tank. "I can assure you, it won't be the upper-class set who responds to state inducement and risks potentially life-threatening side-effects of human egg harvesting; it will be the vulnerable classes of cash-strapped and college-aged women who will be exploited by the state in this scheme," said Fr. Berg.

Jennifer Lahl, founder and national director for the Center for Bioethics and Culture Network, addressed the risks that are involved in the egg harvesting procedure: "The egg donation process has well documented risks associated with the dangerous drugs taken to produce abnormally large numbers of eggs along with the risks of anesthesia and surgery to remove the eggs. Added to these dangers are the longer term risks associated with cancers and damage to the donors' future fertility.

"In an effort to encourage cures for the sick, the NYESSCB is considering a dangerous campaign to permit them to compensate healthy young women for their eggs. It is a twisted sort of logic that seeks cures for some while ignoring the risks to healthy young women," said Ms. Lahl.

Dorinda Bordlee, Vice President and Senior Counsel for the Bioethics Defense Fund, also criticized the ESSCB plan in light of recent scientific advances in the field of stem cell research. "It is outrageously irresponsible for the New York Stem Cell

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board to incentivize the exploitive practice of paying cash-strapped young women thousands of dollars to be injected with high doses of hormones to produce eggs for embryonic stem cell research. This unethical move that endangers women's health is completely unnecessary given the breakthrough methods that produce patient-specific stem cells without the need for cloning, embryos or eggs," said Ms. Bordlee.

Fr. Thomas Berg discusses more fully the exploitation and consent issues in a special commentary, "[Scrambled Ethics](#)," posted June 2 on National Review Online.

The Westchester Institute for Ethics and the Human person was founded in 1998 to renew, deepen, and promote the Western tradition of moral reflection. The institute pursues its objectives in cultural, political, and academic settings. Through seminars, lecture series, and research fellowships, the Westchester Institute seeks to reinvigorate contemporary moral discourse at all levels.

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