

The California Stem Cell and Biotechnology Education and Workforce Development Act of 2009

SB 471, the California Stem Cell and Biotechnology Education and Workforce Development Act of 2009, was signed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger on Monday, October 11, 2009.¹ You may recall LLDF's email alert on this bill when it was in the California Assembly back in July.

Justification for the bill declares that California will soon face shortages of trained professionals to fill jobs in the life sciences sector, and will face a widespread shortage of college educated and technically trained workers to meet industry demands. The bill points out that this gap between supply and demand for trained workers is exacerbated by an alarming high school dropout rate (although it does nothing to address this component of the perceived problem).² With this background, the goal of SB 471 is to make stem cell and biotechnology education and workforce development a state priority and to promote stronger links among industry sectors, the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), and the California public schools.³ The major components of SB 471 are as follows:

- It requires the California Department of Education in consultation with CIRM and representatives of the biotechnology industry to promote stem cell and biotechnology education and workforce development in existing education programs including each of the following:
 - (a) The California Health Science Educators Institute (which helps fund school systems that are developing health science career pathways);⁴
 - (b) The Health Science Capacity Building Project (which is aimed at producing programs to train workers for healthcare jobs);⁵
 - (c) The California Partnership Academies (a three-year high school program designed to integrate academic and career instruction);⁶
 - (d) The Regional Science Resource Centers;⁷
 - (e) The California Career Resource Network, including the State Agency Partners Committee;⁷
 - (f) Multiple Pathway programs (which are study programs that connect classroom instruction with applications outside of school);⁸
 - (g) The K-12 High Speed Network (aimed at providing access to high speed network and Internet services to students and teachers).⁹
- SB 471 further requires the State Department of Education to post on its website information and links to information about the following:
 - (a) Biotechnology education programs, including those identified by the biotechnology industry;
 - (b) The CIRM education initiatives and related stem cell education and workforce development programs.
- It lastly requires the Department of Education to post on its website CIRM's model curriculum on stem cell science, and it requires the Department to communicate the availability of this curriculum to all science teachers and school districts.¹⁰

The final bill analysis predicted a cost of \$65,000 for a time span of 2009–2012.¹¹ Although this price tag seems high for the average taxpayer with a tight budget in difficult economic times, the original version of the bill had a predicted cost of approximately \$700,000.¹² The original cost arose largely from the requirement that

the Department of Education incorporate stem cell science content into its next curriculum revision; it further called for the U.C. Regents to consult with various entities in developing a curriculum for the California State Summer School for Mathematics and Science.¹³ These provisions were removed from the final version of the bill.

Life Legal Defense Foundation opposed the passage of SB 471 on several grounds, including the suggested collaboration between CIRM and the Department of Education. Although stem cell science education in and of itself is good, any education that came through CIRM would have an unfortunate bias in favor of embryonic stem cell research over the proven success of adult and cord blood stem cell research based on the fact that CIRM is almost exclusively focused on funding embryonic stem cell research. CIRM recently announced that grant awards largely included funding for adult stem cell research, causing their spokesperson to effectively concede that adult stem cell research is the best in terms of producing results.¹⁴ And that is what LLDF and others have been saying all along. Even so, CIRM's operational authority arises from Proposition 71, which does not contain any provision for CIRM to be involved in education efforts on any level. Thus, CIRM's collaboration with the Department of Education would be simply one more instance of CIRM's disregard for the limits on its authority as stated in Proposition 71.

Stay Tuned . . .

Look for the next, and for now what will be the last email update in the series on this topic, which will explain more about CIRM's funding of "Bridges to Stem Cell Research Grants (Bridges)." CIRM has appropriated approximately \$40 million of the \$6 billion they were "authorized" to spend to Bridges—all paid for with your tax dollars.

¹ See article at the California Stem Cell Report Blog: <http://californiastemcellreport.blogspot.com/2009/10/cirm-stem-cell-education-bill-signed.html>, October 12, 2009.

² See Section 1 (h) and (i), bill text available at <http://www.aroundthecapitol.com/billtrack/text.html?bvid=20090SB47190CHP>.

³The bill adds several sections to the Education Code: Article 13 (commencing with Section 33475) to Chapter 3 of Part 20 of Division 2 of Title 2 of the Education Code.

⁴ See information available at <http://www.genomeweb.com/bioregionnews/calif-education-officials-cirm-pursue-regenerative-medicine-basics-public-school>.

⁵ Id.

⁶ Id.

⁷ See <http://www.californiacareers.info/>; <http://www.californiacareers.info/partners>.

⁸ See note 4.

⁹ Id. and see section 33475.3; bill text available at <http://www.aroundthecapitol.com/billtrack/text.html?bvid=20090SB47190CHP>.

¹⁰ See section 33475.5.

¹¹ See Senate analysis as of September 9, 2009 <http://www.aroundthecapitol.com/billtrack/analysis.html?aid=34946>.

¹² See the Appropriations committee floor analysis of August 19, 2009, <http://www.aroundthecapitol.com/billtrack/analysis.html?aid=33248>.

¹³ See summary of bill analysis, <http://www.aroundthecapitol.com/billtrack/analysis.html?aid=34946>.

¹⁴ http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/29/health/research/29stem.html?_r=2

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