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STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF STEM CELL RESEARCH

I have put before you this day life and death. Choose life that you and your children may live. Deuteronomy 30:20

Interfaith IMPACT of New York State is a statewide advocacy organization representing Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, and Reform Jewish congregations, clergy and individuals. Our shared faith traditions call upon all people to participate in the ongoing work of perfecting the world.

We are asking the Legislature for \$100 million in State funding for human embryonic stem-cell research this year and every year for the next ten years. Life saving breakthroughs will only happen if adequate funding is made available to advance research utilizing embryonic stem cells.

Human embryonic stem cell (hESC) research uses cells from days-old human embryos that were originally created for fertility treatment purposes and that will eventually deteriorate and be discarded. This research holds the potential of alleviating great suffering among those who are sick, and according to a recent Zogby poll is approved by an overwhelming 69 per cent of all New Yorkers.

In 2006, the Senate budget bill included \$160 million for biomedical research. The Assembly bill included \$300 million over two years specifically for regenerative medicine, including hESC research. This money was not included in the reconciled budget sent to the Governor.

As human beings, we are charged with doing everything possible to preserve the lives we are given. We have been graced with the wisdom to make informed ethical decisions, and we must apply that wisdom. The practice of healing is not merely a profession, it is a righteous obligation. The New York State Legislature should not deny the hope offered by stem cell research to thousands of New Yorkers whose lives have been touched by juvenile diabetes, Parkinson's, spinal injuries and other diseases.

The commandment in all the world's great religions is to comfort the sick. The clergy, congregations, and other individual members of Interfaith IMPACT of New York State urge the Legislature to choose life, to fulfill our obligation to engage in the healing of human suffering by funding human embryonic stem cell research.

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April 24, 2006