

## **Massachusetts Update**

Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick filed a 10 year, \$1 billion Life Sciences Initiative in June 2007 that would finance cutting-edge research, create the nation's largest stem-cell bank, and provide expanded tax credits to life-science companies. Key provisions included \$500 million for new research facilities and labs, \$250 million for research grants and \$250 million in tax credits to private companies involved in the life sciences industry. The House and Senate each drafted their own separate Life Sciences Bills. Each bill passed its respective house earlier this year. A compromise bill has not yet been processed.

On October 25, 2007, the Board of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center voted to approve more than \$8.2 million in funding to the University of Massachusetts Medical School for the establishment of the Massachusetts Human Embryonic Stem Cell (“hESC”) Bank and an international Massachusetts hESC Registry and \$12 million in matching grants investments. The UMASS stem cell bank is expected to include embryonic stem cells donated from Harvard, the National Institutes of Health, and other sources. The web-based registry will be developed concurrently and will provide Massachusetts researchers and commercial entities, as well as the international biomedical research community, access to critical information on the provenance of, and research findings on, hESC lines. These efforts are slated to be completed this spring.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health rescinded the regulation prohibiting the creation of embryos for use in research. The statutory prohibition of the creation of embryos for donation to research remains.

The Biotechnology Research Advisory Council (“BRAC”), an advisory committee constituted pursuant to the 2005 Massachusetts stem cell bill, proposed a number of amendments to the bill authorizing stem cell research in Massachusetts. Among other things, the BRAC is charged with recommending to the Governor and the General Court any changes to the 2005 stem cell law that are necessary to advance stem cell research in the Commonwealth. The BRAC’s amendments include a number of technical corrections to the scientific language in the statute as well as substantive amendments. The substantive amendments include formalizing in law the Department’s 2006 advisory ruling allowing for the reimbursement of reasonable costs associated with a donation of eggs to research as well as eliminating the statutory prohibition against the creation of embryos for research. At this time, no bill has been filed relating to these proposed amendments.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has received an inquiry from the research community as to the practice of egg-sharing under Massachusetts law.