

CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

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EDITORIAL: Stem cell research, center need support

BY CRAIN'S BUSINESS DETROIT EDITORIAL BOARD

What if Michigan had a strong chance to take a chunk out of a new industry projected to grow to \$8 billion within six years? Worth an investment?

The industry is stem cells. Thanks to a voter-approved amendment to the Michigan constitution, restrictions have been lifted on stem cell research. Now, Detroit and the entire region have huge opportunities to transform medical research into commercial applications. But two things need to happen:

First, Michigan lawmakers should lay off trying to do an end run around what voters approved in November 2008. A package of six bills in the Michigan Senate would essentially counter voters' intent. (See story, Page 8.)

Because of the November 2008 vote, Michigan is sparking international interest in life sciences. The University of Michigan, researcher Eva Feldman tells *Crain's*, has received more federal stimulus dollars for medical research than any other university in the country, in large part because of the state's less restrictive climate for stem cell research. This is not the time to apply the brakes because some lawmakers didn't like the voters' decision.

Second, business, community and government leaders need to find a creative way to get a stem cell commercialization center off the ground at Wayne State University's TechTown. As *Crain's* reported, the center will need \$1 million a year for three years to successfully launch. (See "Charlton still seeking stem cell center funds," Jan. 11.)

Already, at least 11 Israeli companies are expected to set up shop at the WSU incubator, three of them related to stem cell research, products or therapies.

A commercialization center located within a few blocks of two of the largest hospital complexes in the Midwest can be a game-changer for Detroit.

The center needs a firm funding commitment before Detroit welcomes the World Stem Cell Summit to Detroit in October. That's an opportunity that would be foolish to squander.