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Senator Matt Bartle's Cord Blood Bill Signed Into Law

JEFFERSON CITY – Legislation drafted and advanced by Senator Matt Bartle, R- Lee's Summit, designed to expand existing umbilical cord blood banks and establish new ones throughout the state was signed into law last week by Governor Matt Blunt.

Umbilical cord blood is a non-controversial source of stem cells, which are considered to be the building blocks of the blood and immune systems. Stem cells can be used in the treatment of more than 50 different cancers, genetic diseases, blood disorders and immune deficiencies. Each day, many more potentially life-saving applications are being developed.

"The use of umbilical cord blood in medical research offers an important and powerful alternative to embryonic stem cell research that show far less promise," Sen. Bartle said.

Senator Bartle noted that umbilical cord blood can also be used in bone marrow transplant work.

"Along with serving as a second source for patients who can't find a matching bone marrow donor," Sen. Bartle said, "cord blood has certain advantages over bone marrow, including fewer and less severe side effects."

Senator Bartle's legislation, Senate Bill 323, creates eligibility criteria under which the state's Life Sciences Research Board can award grants to umbilical cord blood banks. Conditions include the ability and experience of a grant applicant and the level of commitment to cord blood bank expansion the applicant is willing to meet after a grant contract expires.

Recipients of grants, which will be subject to state appropriations, must agree to:

- Operate and maintain an umbilical cord blood bank in Missouri for at least eight years after the award of the grant;
- Gather, collect, and preserve umbilical cord blood only from live births; and
- Comply with financial and reporting requirements adopted by the Life Sciences Research Board.

“An increasingly important component of our state’s economic engine, the study of life sciences is also one of the most promising keys to preserving and bettering human life,” Sen. Bartle said. “Enacting this umbilical cord blood bank initiative is an important stem in promoting the future development of stem cell research.”

The speed in which Senator Bartle and his lawmaking colleagues considered, debated and sent the legislation to the governor outpaces that of Congress, where the matter is currently still being debated and has yet to reach the President.

“Missouri is often at the forefront in taking on issues of national import,” Sen. Bartle said. “Enabling greater quantities of cord blood for life saving research is just another example of the Show-Me State leading by action rather than following by inaction.”

The governor’s signature places Senator Bartle’s legislation into effect on August 28th. The program is subject to future appropriations by the legislature.

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