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NATIONAL BIOETHICS ADVISORY COMMISSION

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August 3, 1998

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

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Dear Mr. President:

Harold T. Shapiro, Ph.D.
Chair

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On June 9, 1997, the National Bioethics Advisory Commission (NBAC) presented to you our report *Cloning Human Beings*. In our report, NBAC concluded that it was morally unacceptable for anyone in the public or private sector, whether in a research or clinical setting, to attempt to create a child by somatic cell nuclear transfer. This conclusion was based on both concerns relating to the safety of the technique were it used on human beings, and to several ethical concerns. On the basis of this conclusion, NBAC recommended the continuation of the moratorium that you imposed on the use of federal funds to support efforts to create a child by somatic cell nuclear transfer, that all private and non-federally funded sectors voluntarily comply with the federal moratorium, and that federal legislation be enacted to prohibit anyone from attempting to create a child using this technology.

The Commission also recommended that, given the diversity of views in the country on this bioethical issue, the federal government and other concerned parties should encourage widespread and continuing deliberation about the ethical and social implications of human cloning. NBAC recognized that in cloning, like other areas of science and medicine, as technological possibilities evolve, so also do the ethical, legal and social perspectives.

In recent months, several developments have come to bear on this issue:

- the introduction and passage of some state legislation related to cloning;
- the introduction of several bills in Congress related to cloning;
- the announcement last week that University of Hawaii researchers have cloned multiple generations of mice;
- the development of statements and other guidelines by international organizations (including UNESCO and the Council of Europe); and
- sporadic attention by the public and the media about the acceptability of cloning (in some quarters, initial fears appear to have subsided).

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Certainly, much more discussion and deliberation is needed before any long term public policy is established in this country. However, if you and your Assistant for Science and Technology believe that it would be beneficial, NBAC would be prepared to provide you with an update on developments since June 1997. This update would include an overview of current state legislation, proposed bills in Congress, scientific developments in cloning (including both mammalian cloning and more basic research techniques), and a review of current thinking from ethical and religious perspectives (focusing on any changes since June 1997). This quick update would not be intended to replace the more comprehensive assessment we recommended in our report, nor would its preparation impede our current work in progress.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Harold T. Shapiro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small flourish at the end.

Harold T. Shapiro
Chair

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