



June 3, 2016

*Re: The Pricing of Fetal Tissue: Additional Questions for the Record
Responses from Catherine Glenn Foster*

The Honorable Janice D. Schakowsky

- 1. Assume that you conducted an investigation and concluded to your satisfaction that no one is profiting from fetal tissue that is made available as a consequence of a legal abortion and that all laws have been followed with regard to donation of that tissue for research purposes. Would you support use of that tissue for research purposes?**

Even if abortion clinics and middleman procurement businesses adhered to current law on trading in babies' body parts and on women's medical privacy HIPAA rights, I could not endorse the use of human fetal tissue for research purposes. Using the bodies of babies who were intentionally terminated is simply too risky, for both women and children. As a woman, and especially as a post-abortive woman, I know that women deserve better than the assembly-line process of signing our rights away I encountered even at a so-called "nice" abortion clinic. Even if abortion clinics and middleman procurement businesses followed the letter of the law, they would still be operating in a system that objectifies women and our children and treats our bodies as profit centers. The system incentivizes selective information, coercion, and duress, in industrialized centers that use abortions to procure raw material in a process that strips women of our privacy. And we as a society must afford aborted children the minimal dignity that comes with not having their remains further picked through to be bought and sold like chattel. Despite clinics' use of clinical terms, we are in fact talking about real and unique human beings whose lives were tragically snuffed out. Abortion clinics have admitted that disposal of these aborted babies' bodies is a real problem for them, and so selling the bodies is a triple windfall: the clinic is paid for the abortion, receives money from the procurement business for minimal if any effort, and is then spared paying for disposal of the aborted babies. And the clinics have also admitted that when it comes to the market in baby body parts, they're more interested in looking like they follow the law than actually following the law - just as one clinic responded to evidence of financial waste and abuse by covering its tracks, saying: "We're going to

hope we don't get caught." Even if a clinic actually followed the letter of the law, common sense and common decency prohibit any market in aborted babies' organs.

2. If you answered no to the first question – or otherwise qualified your response in any manner – are there any circumstances for which you would allow fetal tissue research?

Yes, I believe that a mother who has experienced a miscarriage or stillbirth should have the opportunity to donate her child's body for medical research purposes and potentially allow that child's too-brief life to resonate through generations and save the lives of others. However, I would continue to advocate for strengthening the oversight process and preserve the respect due a fellow human being even in these limited circumstances.

3. Prominent researchers have highlighted the need for fetal tissue to study and address the impact of the Zika virus on fetal brain development. For example, a leading researcher at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center recently confirmed that "It is absolutely essential to study Zika infection in human fetal tissue." Assuming, once again, that all laws related to fetal tissue donation have been followed, would you support the use of fetal tissue as part of research efforts to analyze and understand the Zika virus? To possibly help identify a cure?

Scientists from numerous esteemed academic institutions are very successfully researching the effects of the Zika virus on developing human brain cells without using aborted fetal tissue. For example, this year in the leading research journal *Cell Stem Cell*, researchers from Florida State, Johns Hopkins, and Emory published their work *Zika Virus Infects Human Cortical Neural Progenitors and Attenuates Their Growth*, in which they describe their success in developing a model system demonstrating that Zika can infect and damage some developing brain cells. The model, which the authors note can be used to "investigate the impact and mechanism of [Zika] on human brain development and provide a platform to screen therapeutic compounds," was developed with Nobel Prize-winning, ethically sourced human induced pluripotent stem cells, rather than tissues from aborted babies. A recent Brazilian study, *Zika Virus Impairs Growth in Human Neurospheres and Brain Organoids*, likewise used groundbreaking hiPSCs in its confirmation that developing human brain cells are susceptible to infection and damage by the Zika virus. And we know that modern vaccine development is not based on fetal tissue. For example, scientists recently achieved 100% protection in tests of a vaccine for the Zika-related Dengue virus; this vaccine was developed using monkey cells and a mosquito cell line. However, I do believe that a mother who has experienced a miscarriage or stillbirth should have the opportunity to donate her child's body.