

## **The State of Rhode Island IASCR Update**

The Rhode Island Umbilical Cord Blood Bank Act (2008-H 7963aa and 2008-S 2160A) was recently signed into law by the State's Governor. It would require hospitals and other obstetrical facilities and professionals to inform their patients of the option of donating or storing umbilical cord blood in umbilical cord blood banks. This legislation was sponsored by Rep. Eileen S. Naughton (D-Dist. 21, Warwick), and Sen. Leo R. Blais (R-Dist. 21, Coventry, Foster, Scituate) together with the Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts and would make it easier for people to store or donate potentially lifesaving cord blood. Twelve states have already enacted similar legislation, including Massachusetts. The Umbilical Cord Blood Bank Act falls in line with what federal government enacted in 2005 the "Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Act" which recognizes the benefits of cord blood stem cells and authorizes expanded collection and maintenance of 150,000 new cord blood samples through the C.W. Bill Young Cell Transplantation Program (formerly the National Bone Marrow Donor Registry). This federal act also reinforced the need for "information provided to the maternal donor regarding all of her medically appropriate cord blood options."

An income tax check-off program for contributions to the RI Blood Center's Umbilical Cord Blood Bank Initiative was drafted in the 2008 legislative session and would be a state tax check-off form that filers can elect to include with their state income tax return. The check-off allows filers to have donations automatically deducted from their refund checks for whatever amount they wish to give. This bill has not passed as of yet.

For further information on Rhode Island's Cord Blood Banking initiative, visit the link <http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Cordblood/>. There you will find a page with participants, meeting notes, agendas, and any recent updates for the Special House Commission to Promote and Develop a Cord Blood Program/Bank for the Future of Disease Management in the State of Rhode Island. This commission is chaired by Representative Eileen Naughton.

Rhode Island is currently looking into a \$100 million dollar bond proposal through the Economic Development Corporation and the Science Technology Advisory Council for life-sciences. This STAC group is composed of public and private researchers, universities, laboratories and hospitals.