

Turning Medical Waste into Medical Miracles

Excerpts of remarks of Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) during debate in the House of Representatives on [H.R. 5160—the Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Reauthorization Act of 2025](#) July 20, 2026

Mr. Speaker, each year, over [3.6 million babies](#) are born in the United States. In the past, virtually every placenta and umbilical cord was tossed as medical waste. Today, doctors have turned this medical waste into medical miracles.

Not only has God, in His infinite wisdom and goodness, created a placenta and an umbilical cord to nurture and protect the precious life of an unborn child—but now, we know that another gift awaits immediately after birth. Something very special is left behind: umbilical cord blood that is teeming with lifesaving stem cells.

Mr. Speaker, today, the House of Representatives will vote to reauthorize the [Stem Therapeutic and Research Act of 2005](#), a law that I authored twenty-one years ago.

The law created a new nationwide umbilical cord blood stem cell program designed to collect, derive, type, and cryogenically freeze cord blood units for transplantation into patients to mitigate and cure serious disease. Pursuant to the law, it also provided cord blood stem cells for research. The new cord blood program was combined with an expanded bone marrow initiative, crafted over several years by our distinguished former colleague, Congressman Bill Young.

Umbilical cord blood stem cells obtained after the birth of a child have proven to be highly efficacious in treating over [75 diseases](#), including lymphoma, leukemia, sickle cell disease, and other metabolic and immune deficiencies.

I would like to recognize and thank [Dr. Joanne Kurtzberg of Duke](#)—an internationally renowned expert in pediatric hematology/oncology, pediatric blood and marrow transplantation, umbilical cord blood banking and transplantation. Dr. Kurtzberg helped draft my original legislation 26 years ago—it took five long years to enact—and continues to be an extraordinary pioneer in the field.

Earlier today, Dr. Kurtzberg said “Cord blood has been used as a donor for transplant enabling over 50,000 patients with cancer, blood diseases, and other genetic conditions to have a life-saving transplant. Cord blood is also used as starting material for manufacturing immune effector cells, like CAR-T cells and others, to treat patients with cancer and autoimmune diseases. There is exciting research using cord blood to treat children with cerebral palsy, birth asphyxia, and autism.”

The National Cord Blood Inventory, or NCBI, provides funding to public cord blood banks participating in the program to allow them to expand the national inventory of cord blood units available for transplant. These units are then listed on the registry by the National Marrow Donor Program, or NMDP. The funds appropriated thus far have led to an important increase in the overall number of cord blood units available through the

national registry, now totaling over [121,000 available units](#). Within the NDMP Registry, there are now more than [750,000 cord blood units worldwide](#).

The program registry, Mr. Speaker, allows patients and physicians to locate matching cord blood units, as well as adult donors, for marrow and peripheral blood stem cells. The program is the world's largest, most diverse donor registry, with more than [43 million potential marrow donors](#) around the world. To date, NMDP, through its operation of the program, has facilitated over [150,000 transplants](#).

The bill before us today authorizes \$280 million for these programs over 5 years—\$115 million for cord blood and \$165 million for the bone marrow program—to ensure that thousands of present and future patients benefit from this extraordinary field of regenerative medicine.

I am deeply grateful to Chairman Brett Guthrie, for his amazing support and leadership in advancing this bill through the committee and to Democrat lead cosponsor Doris Matsui—and original cosponsors Mr. Bilirakis, Ms. PINGREE, Ms. TENNEY, and Mr. MFUME.

Special thanks to Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Health Subcommittee Chair Morgan Griffith and Ranking Member Diana DeGette

I am also deeply thankful for the contributions of the staff who assisted with this bill, including, in my office, Rebecca West, Evan Heitman, John McDonough; on the Committee on

Energy and Commerce, Staff Director Megan Jackson and professional staff member Emma Schultheis and Jackie Weinrich.