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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Maryland Stem Cell Research Commission Receives Strong Interest in Third Year of Funding**

***Commission receives 187 Letters of Intent, 60 more than last year and announces plans to issue a Request for Information for shared resource funding***

COLUMBIA, Md. (Nov. 18, 2008) – The Maryland Stem Cell Research Commission (Commission) has received 187 Letters of Intent in response to its three official Requests for Applications (RFAs) for the third year of funding through the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund (MSCRF) under the Maryland Stem Cell Research Act of 2006. The Commission plans to issue a Request for Information (RFI) to seek ideas and suggestions for new grants for shared resources to be funded by the MSCRF in the near future.

“This positive response is a testament to the growing interest in Maryland’s stem cell research program, and our shared commitment to remaining a national leader in the life sciences industry,” said Governor Martin O’Malley. “I look forward to the advancements resulting from this funding, as Maryland continues to lead the way in innovation and research of the lifesaving potential of stem cell treatments.”

“The Commission is extremely gratified and fulfilled by the impressive response to our request for Letters of Intent as it serves as a vote of confidence from the stem cell research community,” said Karen Rothenberg, chair of the Commission.

The Letter of Intent is a required component for funding from the MSCRF, which is \$18 million for FY 2009. Governor O’Malley has designated stem cell research funding a priority through the BIO 2020 Initiative. During the second year of funding (FY 2008), the Commission received 127 Letters of Intent that translated to 122 applications. Filing a Letter of Intent does not obligate the company or researcher to submit an application, and it is intended to help the Commission plan for the necessary Scientific Peer Review after the applications are submitted. Of the Letters of Intent received:

- 55 were for RFA-MD-09-1 (Investigator-Initiated Research Grants) – These grants are designed for investigators with preliminary data supporting the grant application. These Investigator-Initiated Research Grants will be for up to \$300,000 of direct costs per year, for up to five years. The Commission received 33 applications for this RFA last year.

- 82 were for RFA-MD-09-2 (Exploratory Research Grants) – These grants are designed for investigators who are new to the stem cell field (young investigators and investigators from other fields) and for new hypotheses, approaches, mechanisms or models that may differ from current thinking in the stem cell field, without any preliminary data supporting the application. These Exploratory Research Grants will be for up to \$100,000 of direct costs per year, for up to two years. The Commission received 64 applications for this RFA last year.
- 50 were for RFA-MD-09-3 (Post-Doctoral Grants) – These grants are designed for post-doctoral fellows who wish to conduct basic and/or transitional research on all types of human stem cells in Maryland. These Post-Doctoral Research Grants will be for up to \$55,000 of direct, indirect and fringe benefits costs per year, for up to two years. The Commission received 24 applications for this RFA last year.

For a full set of application guidelines, please visit [www.mscref.org](http://www.mscref.org). Applications for funding under these three RFA's are due on Jan. 15, 2009. The Commission will announce award decisions in May 2009.

The Commission is also planning to issue an RFI for shared resources, which will seek information about what types of facilities or equipment are needed by researchers to enhance stem cell research in Maryland. The shared resources for which grants could be suggested include: facility renovation, expansion or upgrades; the purchase, installation and maintenance of equipment; or staff training. Organizations such as public and private, for-profit and non-profit, universities, colleges, research institutes, companies, medical centers and others will be encouraged to respond to this RFI.

The RFI will aid the Commission in reaching its goal to broaden and advance knowledge of human stem cell biology that will be relevant for eventual development of clinical applications, and to enable, support and accelerate such clinical applications for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of human diseases and conditions.

Previous MSCRF awardees will be presenting notable findings in stem cell research at the First Annual Maryland Stem Cell Research Symposium on December 3, 2008 at The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory in Laurel. Governor Martin O'Malley and the Commission will be hosting the event which will feature posters and presentations from over 60 Maryland-supported stem cell scientists. Governor O'Malley and House Speaker Michael Busch will deliver remarks. For a detailed agenda, please visit <http://www.mscref.org/content/events/annual.cfm>.

#### **About the Maryland Stem Cell Research Commission**

Established as an independent unit within the Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO), the Maryland Stem Cell Research Commission has set up criteria, standards and requirements to administer the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund in accordance with the Maryland Stem Cell Research Act of 2006. The Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund has been established to promote state-funded stem research. With a current budget of \$18 million for FY 2009, the Commission will support grants to public and private entities in the State. For more

information about the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund and a list of Commission members, please visit [www.mscref.org](http://www.mscref.org).

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