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Hawaii Attorney General Joins Multistate Coalition Urging Trump Administration to Ease Restrictions and Allow Medical Professionals to Research Solutions to COVID-19 Pandemic

HONOLULU –Attorney General Clare E. Connors today joined a coalition of 15 attorneys general led by California in sending a letter to President Trump and the Department of Health and Human Services calling on the Administration to end its research ban on fetal tissue to aid the nation’s medical response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The attorneys general argue that this exemption could help scientists develop vaccines and study the virus’ impacts on pregnant women and children.

“A better understanding of COVID-19 is critical to stopping the spread,” said Attorney General Connors. “With the states doing everything they can to flatten the curve, the federal administration needs to do everything it can so that scientists and medical professionals are able to find solutions.”

Scientists at the National Institute of Health who are working on potential therapies for COVID-19 have been appealing the administration for permission to work on fetal tissue, arguing that the current ban hampers our nation’s ability to address COVID-19. Research using fetal tissue has led to the development of other vaccines such as those for polio, rubella, and measles.

According to the American Medical Association, “fetal tissue has also been used to study the mechanism of viral infections and to diagnose viral infections and inherited diseases, as well as to develop transplant therapies,” – work that is pertinent to the current COVID-19 health crisis. Recognizing the importance of these scientific contributions, in 1993 members of Congress on both sides of the aisle voted to legalize fetal tissue research. The attorneys general argue that the June 2019 ban impedes necessary research efforts during this unprecedented public health crisis, and urge the administration to lift the ban.

In sending the letter, Attorney General Connors joins the attorneys general of California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Maine, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

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