



May 24, 2007

Representative Xavier Becerra
1119 Longworth House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515-0531

Dear Representative Becerra:

I am writing to commend you for introducing HR 977 to prevent the patenting of human genes. We have been concerned for some time that patents have been granted by the Patent and Trademark Office on genes and other sequences in the human genome.

Thousands of gene patent applications have been filed and granted by the United States Patent and Trademark Office. Patents on genetic material raise many controversial issues involving exclusive control over naturally occurring gene sequences and the significant curtailment of research, diagnoses, and treatment of diseases in plants, animals, and humans. Gene patent applications that directly claim genes and/or include the corresponding proteins may greatly either limit or prohibit other genetic and scientific technology research. Grants of exclusive control will substantially hinder efforts to effectively treat, control, and further understanding of plant, animal, and human development and disease.

In 1995, more than 200 religious leaders from every faith tradition raised theological and ethical objections to gene and animal patenting. In 2005, a committee of the National Academies of Science concluded that major changes were needed in the patenting of genes and proteins. Many patients with genetic diseases and conditions have donated genetic samples to help identify genes related to their condition only to find that researchers patented the genetic information, which limits the very kinds of research they wished to promote.

We applaud your leadership in this area and look forward to working with you to pass this legislation.

Sincerely,

Joseph Mendelson, III
Legal Director

