Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3.

Since President Bush announced his stem cell funding restrictions, we've learned a number of things that, in my opinion, make the policy even less ethical than it was in 2001.

We learned that the President was wrong about how many stem cell lines would be available to researchers under his ban. The President said there were more than 60 available lines, and soon after it was claimed that there were 78. We learned later that year that only 24 or 25 of those lines were ready for research. In 2003, the administration was conceded that only 11 lines were available to researchers. Today only about 20 lines are available, and all of them were grown on substances that might make them unfit for future use in therapies.

We've also learned that since the President's announcement, the proportion of stem cell research conducted in the United States has shrunk. There's a recent analysis that looked at all scientific papers on human embryonic stem cell research published over the last several years. The White House has cited this study to point out that almost half of the labs producing papers on the topic from 1998 through 2004 were in the U.S. But in pulling out this overall statistic, the White House seems to have ignored the study's title: ``An international gap in human embryonic stem cell research.'' The authors found that after the restrictions, the U.S. contribution to embryonic stem cell research dropped. In 2001, about one-third of all stem cell research papers were produced here. But by 2004--just three years later--that proportion had dropped to about one-quarter.

The study's authors wrote that the U.S. is ``falling behind'' in embryonic stem cell research. They wrote that this growing gap could put U.S. patients at a disadvantage if therapies are discovered. In fact, they concluded that ``U.S. congressional delays and the Bush administration's resistance to an expansion of Federal funding suggest a real danger for U.S. biomedicine.''

Scientists are saying that the administration's ban stymies their research. Many U.S. scientists are getting offers to work overseas because funding is available there and policies are clear. The most discouraging news is that young scientists are reportedly hesitating to even enter this field because it's not being funded in proportion to its potential.

The White House is pushing other distorted interpretations of the issue. In a report released yesterday, the White House pointed out that there are many clinical trials related to adult stem cells, but none related to embryonic stem cells. This is truly an Alice-in-Wonderland style argument. The administration sharply restricts researchers' ability to work with embryonic stem cells and pushes researchers to work with adult stem cells. Then, it turns around several years later and notes, to no one's surprise, that most of the clinical trials are being done with adult stem cells. One can only wonder where we'd be if America's top researchers were free to work with the most powerful tools.

Some of you may have noticed last week's news reports on amniotic stem cells. These cells appear to hold some potential for research because they can develop into multiple cell types. We all want to understand what this research means for this debate. And I think we can probably agree that the lead researcher, Dr. Anthony Atala, is a good interpreter.

What he has said, consistently, is that amniotic stem cells do not substitute for embryonic stem cells. He has said that the cells have different qualities, may have different potentials for growing into different cell types, and may have different applications down the road.

I think we should listen to the scientist behind this study, and not those who want to distort this promising news to suppress other potentially life-saving research.

Dr. Atala's explanation makes one thing very clear. The most important reason amniotic stem cells can't replace embryonic stem cells is that we do not know enough about either type. A growing body of research has made clear that stem cells of all kinds have much to teach us about the human body and disease. Hopefully this knowledge will lead to treatments and cures. But if we're going to get there, we need a serious Federal commitment to funding all promising and ethical stem cell research.

That is what this bill will do. I respect the beliefs of those who are concerned about protecting human life. But it is my opinion--widely shared by most Americans--that the use of cells from embryos that will otherwise be discarded is well within ethical boundaries.

Like many of my colleagues here, what I consider unethical is telling people suffering from diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's that their suffering doesn't justify the strongest possible federal commitment to finding a cure.

What I consider unethical is turning to the generations following us and telling them that we didn't make as much progress, and we won't be passing on as much scientific understanding, as we could have.

We have already squandered valuable time, but it is not too late. It's time to recover lost ground--and reclaim the leadership role our country has earned in biomedical science--by supporting this ethical and important research.