



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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WCC, OTHER PRO-LIFE GROUPS BACK BAN ON GENDER-BASED ABORTIONS

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) joined other pro-life groups in voicing support for a bill to impose a civil penalty on doctors who knowingly perform sex-selective abortions. Assembly Bill 217 (Rep. Steve Kestell, R-Elkhart Lake) received a public hearing on May 29 before the Assembly Committee on Health.

A sex-selective abortion is an abortion that is performed when the parent or parents of the unborn child abort because the baby is not of the desired sex. Most of the time, unborn girls are aborted because the parents wanted to have a son. In 2012, a journal affiliated with Planned Parenthood, the *Guttmacher Policy Review*, issued a paper on sex-selective abortions (“A Problem-and-Solution Mismatch: Son Preference and Sex-Selective Abortion Bans”), which recognized the widespread use of such abortions in Asian countries and acknowledged that the practice may be spreading to the United States.

The Guttmacher paper concluded that the real way to stop sex-selection abortions is not to prohibit such abortions but to address the underlying conditions that can lead to them, namely an end to poverty and violence, and an increase in access to health care and education for women.

WCC Associate Director for Respect Life and Social Concerns Barbara Sella agreed that there is much work to be done on these underlying issues and she pointed out that the Catholic Church runs charities, hospitals, schools, and prison ministries precisely to assist the most vulnerable.

“Here in Wisconsin, the bishops have long supported efforts to expand educational opportunities, increase access to health care, rein in predatory lenders, increase the minimum wage, reform criminal justice, improve immigration laws – to name a few,” she noted.

“But serving the needs of the poor – as vital as it is – is not enough to halt the spread of sex-selective abortions or abortions in general. For that to happen a cultural shift has to take place and the law can play an important part in that shift. The law signals what is and is not acceptable behavior. Choosing to abort based on gender or ability, or some other trait is simply wrong.”

“Abortion rights logic rests on the premise of freedom or absolute choice – a choice that by definition has no limits,” Sella argued. “This, however, is not what defines true liberty or freedom. True freedom involves living in such a way that one does not deny freedom to others.”

“AB 217 forces us to confront once again the question of what truly furthers respect for women: absolute freedom that would deny the right to life to a girl because she is not a boy or an affirmation that her life is worthy of respect both inside and outside the womb.”

Other groups supporting the bill include Wisconsin Right to Life, Wisconsin Family Action, and Pro-Life Wisconsin. Opponents include Planned Parenthood and the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health, Inc. The committee took no action on the bill.

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For more information, contact Barbara Sella at 608/257-0004.