



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Representative Jeff Stone, Chair  
Members, Assembly Committee on Health

FROM: Barbara Sella, Associate Director 

DATE: February 8, 2012

RE: Assembly Bill 371, Coercive and Webcam Abortion Prevention

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The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) strongly supports Assembly Bill 371, which would protect women from being coerced into having an abortion and prohibit webcam abortions.

The Church is well aware that many women choose abortion because of the pressure they are under from the baby's father, family members, friends, or employers. In these instances, moral responsibility for the taking of an innocent human life rests especially with those who have obliged her to abort her unborn child. Women in this situation need to know that abortion is not their only option. We therefore support requiring that the physician performing the abortion assess whether the woman is in fact consenting voluntarily to the abortion. We also think it is essential to provide her with access to a telephone so that she can contact an organization that assists victims of domestic abuse.

Assembly Bill 371 would also repeal state statute s. 940.04(3) and (4). In 1985, the WCC was among those groups supporting the passage of s. 940.13, which explicitly prohibits the prosecution of women who obtain abortions. Repeal of the older statute would leave no doubt that our state is not interested in prosecuting women, but only in finding ways to help them and their unborn children to thrive.

Finally, the bill would prohibit the provision of webcam abortions. The taking of innocent human life is wrong in every instance, but the mechanical, impersonal character of webcam abortions is particularly chilling. Not giving a woman a physical exam before dispensing pills designed to destroy her unborn child after she leaves the abortion facility is reckless at best and potentially harmful to her health and life. And how can a doctor adequately assess a woman's state of mind in such a situation?

Even as we support this bill, we recognize that much more will have to be done to help pregnant women who feel that abortion is their only or best option. We need a renewed sense of both personal responsibility and social responsibility to reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies and abortions. We need greater support for marriage, parenting, and adoption. We need to reach out to women who find themselves pregnant and isolated so that they don't feel shamed or pressured into aborting. We need to make more women and men aware of the resources that

exist to help them cope with the aftermath of an abortion. Organizations like Project Rachel, Rachel's Vineyard, and Care Net – to name just three – exist in many of our communities to offer post-abortion healing and reconciliation.

Women who are experiencing an unplanned pregnancy deserve better than abortion – surgical or chemical. Women deserve to know that choosing life for their baby does not mean abandoning all hope for an education, for meaningful employment, and for a better life.

For all these reasons, we urge you to support Assembly Bill 371.