

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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Archbishop Appeals for Governor's Signature on Human Cloning Ban

In a letter to Governor Jim Doyle, Milwaukee Archbishop Timothy Dolan urged the approval of Assembly Bill 499, which would ban human cloning in Wisconsin.

The legislature passed Assembly Bill 499 in September. If enacted, Wisconsin would join at least six other states that have banned all human cloning. An additional half-dozen states have laws on the books banning any research that destroys a human embryo.

While opponents of the bill argued that the state should differentiate between "reproductive" human cloning and "therapeutic" or "research" cloning, the legislature approved a comprehensive ban, recognizing that all human cloning creates a human embryo.

The letter, issued on behalf of the Roman Catholic bishops of the five dioceses in Wisconsin, affirms the importance of setting boundaries for scientific research. "AB 499 does not hold Wisconsin back, it moves Wisconsin forward by establishing protection of human life at all stages as a preeminent value - a value that will ultimately serve Wisconsin well and stand the test of time."

Acknowledging the Governor's publicly stated reservations about the bill, Dolan asserted, "Indeed, we share your desire to discover cures and treatments for life threatening disease, and, as you know, Catholic health care has been in the lead in such initiatives. But such noble ends must always be measured against the means used to attain them. When the means entails the destruction of human life, we must find another way."

In response to arguments that a human cloning ban places Wisconsin at an economic disadvantage, Dolan noted Wisconsin's progressive tradition. "In the 20th century we did not regard decisions to provide unemployment insurance, worker's compensation insurance, and living wages as threats to our manufacturing sector. Neither should we regard a policy that disavows the deliberate creation and destruction of human embryos as detrimental to biotechnology in the 21st century. Now as in the past, we should affirm that human life is an intrinsic good that transcends economic factors."

While reaffirming the shared commitment to seeking cures and alleviating suffering, the Archbishop concluded with an appeal to the Governor "to lead Wisconsin on a path that pursues these goals without creating embryos for the express purpose of destroying them."

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