



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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CATHOLIC CONFERENCE SUPPORTS STATE BAN ON PARTIAL BIRTH ABORTIONS

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) called on state legislators to pass a bill banning partial birth abortions at a January 31st hearing in the State Capitol.

Assembly Bill 710 would modify existing state law, currently deemed unconstitutional according to a US Court of Appeals ruling, and align Wisconsin's statute with valid federal law banning partial birth abortions. The Assembly Committee on Judiciary and Ethics heard testimony for several hours on Assembly Bill 710, including a statement prepared and presented by WCC Associate Directors Barbara Sella and Kim Wadas.

"As Catholics, we try to evaluate every public policy in light of its impact on the human person," Wadas testified. "In the case of abortion, pro-choice advocates generally concede that a human life is in the womb, but that this life has fewer rights than those of its mother. This simply does not stand to reason."

A partial birth abortion consists of turning an unborn child into the breech position and delivering all but the child's head. The abortionist then stabs the baby in the back of the neck, suctions out the child's brains in order to collapse the head, and then delivers the corpse.

Under AB 710, a physician who is prosecuted for performing such an abortion would be granted the right to a hearing before the medical examining board to determine if the abortion was necessary to save the life of the mother. If found guilty, the abortionist would be convicted of a Class I felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000, imprisonment of up to three and a half years, or both.

It is estimated that there are about half a dozen partial birth abortions in Wisconsin every year. However, the number could be much higher since there is no official recordkeeping of the abortion method used in the nearly 13,000 abortions performed in Wisconsin every year.

"In a democracy such as ours, we uphold the principle that we are all created equal, and endowed by our Creator with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," Wadas noted. "Mother and child share these fundamental rights. Rather than destroying the child in order to uphold the mother's right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness, we need to look for different ways to uphold the rights of both."

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Wadas also called on all pro-life advocates and legislators to recognize that it is not enough to remove unjust laws.

“We do not close our eyes to the suffering and despair of women who are facing an unwanted pregnancy. In fact, it is precisely in helping women that we can best help their unborn children,” she emphasized.

“In addition to rethinking labor, urban, residential, and social policies to create a society where it is possible to bear and care for children, we need to change our abortion laws, so that when a woman is faced with an unplanned pregnancy, she will not feel the subtle pressure and temptation to kill her unborn child,” she added.

In order to pass constitutional muster, the bill includes an exception if the procedure is needed to “save the life of the mother.” Wadas said that a vote for such a bill is justified.

“Even though the Church's teaching on the matter is clear – abortion is never permissible – in his encyclical, *The Gospel of Life*, Pope John Paul II counseled that ‘when it is not possible to overturn or completely abrogate a pro-abortion law, an elected official... could licitly support proposals aimed at limiting the harm done by such a law and at lessening its negative consequences at the level of general opinion and public morality,’” Wadas explained.

The committee took no action on the bill after the hearing.