



PROTECTING EARLY HUMAN LIFE

INTRODUCTION

As Catholics, we believe that every human being has intrinsic value, and that the foundation of all of our individual actions and collective laws must be the protection of the human person – from conception to natural death. This is why we have a consistent moral vision that calls us not only to oppose all direct threats to human life, but also to support all things that allow human beings to flourish as free and responsible persons.

WCC POSITIONS

In view of what is likely to be considered this session, the WCC will support the following proposals to protect human life at its earliest stages. This list is not exhaustive and the WCC will engage other proposals related to human life should they be introduced.

Abortion Opt-Out in State Health Care Exchanges. The 2010 federal health care reform act (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act or PPACA) mandates that states establish health care exchanges. Although health insurance plans offering abortion coverage are allowed to participate in these exchanges and receive federal subsidies, PPACA also gives states the right to affirmatively opt-out of offering these plans. The WCC supports legislation to opt Wisconsin out of abortion coverage in any future state health insurance exchange plan.

Defund Abortion Providers. Although abortion providers in Wisconsin are barred from directly using taxpayer dollars to perform abortions, they nevertheless do receive federal and state dollars for “family planning” services. These services normally include providing contraceptives and morning-after pills to adults and children (without parental consent), testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy testing, pelvic exams, and Pap smears. Despite claims to the contrary, abortion is not health care. The WCC opposes taxpayer funding of entities that promote or perform abortion, and supports redirecting these funds to support maternal and child health.

Reduce Infant Mortality. Infant mortality is defined as the death of a baby before his or her first birthday. In the United States, the average infant mortality rate in 2007 (according to the U.S. Census) was 6.42 deaths per 1,000 live births. During that same period, Wisconsin’s white infant mortality rate was 5.27 deaths, but the rate for black infants was 15.6. Wisconsin ranks as 38th among 39 reporting states and the District of Columbia for African American infant mortality rates. The WCC supports measures to combat high regional mortality rates for minorities in Wisconsin, including public and private partnerships.

State Adoption Tax Credit. Many families are open to adopting children, but they do not have the financial means to pay all the adoption fees. The WCC supports providing more assistance to adoptive families and their new children. Under current state law, parents can claim a

maximum state income tax *deduction* of \$325 for adoption expenses. The WCC recommends that this deduction be replaced by a nonrefundable state adoption tax *credit*, so that parents can reduce their state taxes by a more significant amount.

Life-affirming Support for Pregnant Women. Women who are experiencing an unplanned pregnancy and who are feeling pressured to abort need more than information about available programs and services. They need non-judgmental, effective, and life-affirming support. They need dedicated counselors and mentors to help them obtain material assistance, education, job training, adoption options, and skills for positive parenting and healthy living. The WCC recommends that the state foster public and private partnerships to give women effective life-affirming alternatives to abortion.

Mentoring Teen Mothers. Pregnant teenagers are especially vulnerable to abortion and poverty. The WCC supports programs to mentor and support teen mothers so that they, and their children, can have healthier futures. In Brown County, for example, Catholic Charities is collaborating with Big Brothers Big Sisters in order to mentor young mothers one-on-one. The WCC recommends that this mentoring model be replicated throughout the state.

ACTION REQUESTED

Write or call your legislator and make the following points:

1. Support state opt-out of abortion coverage.
2. Support defunding abortion providers.
3. Support reducing infant mortality.
4. Support a state adoption tax credit.
5. Support life-affirming options for pregnant women and teen mothers.

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