



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 201: PROHIBITING SEX-SELECTIVE ABORTIONS

Presented to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) strongly supports Senate Bill 201, which would prohibit knowingly performing sex-selective abortions.

In 2012, 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. The 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.

We agree that there is much work to be done on these underlying issues. 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.

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. 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.

Human history is fraught with the errors of allowing absolute freedom to go unchecked. SB 201 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.

Senate Bill 201 is a sensible bill that ensures that sex discrimination will not be cloaked in the liberty of choice. We urge you to support it. Respect for women begins in the womb.