

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CATHOLIC CONFERENCE THANKS GOVERNOR FOR SIGNING BILL ON ABSTINENCE

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference welcomed Governor Doyle's decision to sign a bill to strengthen the teaching on abstinence in school human growth and development programs. The Governor signed Senate Bill 286, authored by State Senator Mary Lazich in his office on May 23.

"We are pleased and grateful the Governor signed this bill and grateful to Senator Lazich and Representative Mark Gundrum for introducing it," WCC Executive Director John Huebscher said. "It is our belief that, properly taught, abstinence education can give students the support and practical tools they need to withstand the enormous pressures to engage in premature sexual activity. By signing the bill he strengthens those efforts."

Huebscher added that the bishops of the United States discussed abstinence in their 1991 statement, *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*. He noted that the bishops wrote at the time that abstinence education is not just about avoiding pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, or about avoiding feelings of being used or betrayed.

The bishops stressed that abstinence should be thought of "as a yes to one's future and to one's future spouse. It is a yes to one's own inner potential, to one's ability to love and to express love. It is a yes to trust, faithfulness and friendship."

"Education in human sexuality cannot hope to be successful unless parents, educators, indeed all of us, regularly offer students opportunities to develop a strong sense of self-worth," Huebscher added.

"No single bill or policy is a panacea for ending teenage pregnancy. But affirming the value of abstinence is a vital component of that effort. The Governor did Wisconsin's families a service by affirming that what most parents try to teach at home deserves additional emphasis in our schools," Huebscher concluded.

For more information, contact: John Huebscher at 608/257-0004.

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131 W. Wilson St., Suite 1105
Madison, WI 53703
608/257-0004
www.wisconsincatholic.org