

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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WCC Appeals to Governor to Sign Abstinence Bill

In a letter to Governor Jim Doyle, the Wisconsin Catholic Conference urged him to sign Senate Bill 286, a bi-partisan bill that would strengthen the teaching on abstinence in school human growth and development programs.

If enacted, SB 286 would require that if a school board provides human growth and development programs, it must ensure that all the instruction presents abstinence from sexual activity as the preferred choice of behavior in relationship to all sexual activity for unmarried pupils, and emphasize that abstinence from sexual activity before marriage is the most effective way to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

The WCC letter to the Governor referred to a 1991 statement issued by the bishops of the United States, entitled, *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*.

Abstinence education, the bishops wrote, is not just about avoiding pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, avoiding feelings of being used or betrayed. Nor is it about promoting sexual frustration or repression.

Rather, “[a]bstinence 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.”

“We recognize,” wrote WCC Executive Director John Huebscher, “that many opponents fear that SB 286 represents an effort to drive all other education in human sexuality from the schools. This is not our intent. We merely seek to assure that instruction that engages the whole student and fosters greater sexual maturity receives special emphasis.”

Huebscher concluded, “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. By appealing to the inner strength and resolve of children and adolescents, to their inherent dignity and creativity, and to their need for love and responsibility, an intelligent and compassionate abstinence program can become just such an opportunity to form free and mature individuals.”

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