



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RESTRICTING TAXPAYER FUNDING FOR ABORTION

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the bishops of Wisconsin, supports and offered testimony on two bills that would restrict the use of taxpayer funds to pay for elective abortions.

On April 19, 2017, the WCC testified in support of Assembly Bill 128 (Rep. André Jacque, R-De Pere), which would prohibit public authorities from subsidizing elective abortions.

Much like the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, AB 128 would prohibit Wisconsin's Group Insurance Board from providing health insurance that includes coverage for abortion services, with exceptions for rape, incest, and life of the mother. According to a recent report from the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, twenty-one states restrict abortion coverage in public employee insurance plans, including Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio.

Associate Director Barbara Sella testified that “taking a human life is not health care, for it is neither healthy nor caring. As Pope Francis has written, ‘It is not ‘progressive’ to try to resolve problems by eliminating a human life...’” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 214)

Sella stressed that while every unborn child deserves protection, “every woman deserves support to carry her child to term and, if she so chooses, to raise her child. All pregnant women deserve the best pre-natal care, maternity leave, child care, and the necessary assistance if they have a child with special needs.”

The bill passed the Assembly Committee on Health by a vote of 7-3 and now awaits a floor vote in the Assembly.

On July 18, 2017, Sella testified in support of Assembly Bill 206 (Rep. Jacque), which would prohibit the University of Wisconsin System or the University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority from allowing their employees to perform or assist in the performance of an abortion outside of a hospital setting. The bill would clarify existing Wisconsin law that places prohibitions on state funds being directed to the performance of abortions. Currently, the University of Wisconsin contracts to have medical faculty perform, and train residents to perform, abortions at Planned Parenthood's Madison clinic.

“Pope Francis has captured the world's attention for his embrace of the most marginalized people; for warning against a ‘throwaway culture’ that discards unwanted persons as though they were consumer goods; and for insisting that we can never ‘solve a problem by eliminating a

person,” Sella noted. “These are not uniquely Catholic or even religious ideas. They are reflections of the deepest humanity and should inspire all of us to set our sights higher.”

“As the state’s leading medical research and teaching institution, the UW is called to solve problems in a way that upholds human dignity and protects human life. Elective abortion, even if legal, denies the life and dignity of the unborn child. That is not what the Wisconsin Idea is about. Rather than taking human lives, the tradition of our state and the mission of the UW are best served by exclusively healing and saving lives.”

The Assembly Committee on Science and Technology took no further action on the bill.

Readers are encouraged to contact their Assembly representatives and to urge them to vote in favor of both bills.

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