



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

**For Immediate Release
September 13, 2007**

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE SUPPORTS COERCIVE ABORTION PREVENTION ACT

On September 13, 2007, the Wisconsin Catholic Conference, the public policy voice of Wisconsin's Bishops, testified in support of a proposal put forward by Wisconsin Right to Life to protect women who are being coerced into having an abortion.

Assembly Bill 427 is authored by Representative Mark Gundrum (R-New Berlin) and Senator Roger Breske (D-Eland).

This bipartisan proposal would do two things. First, it would require the physician who is to perform or induce the abortion to determine whether or not the woman has, in fact, freely and without coercion consented to the abortion. Second, the bill would require the physician to inform the woman of services for those threatened with or victimized by domestic abuse, and to provide her with a private phone if she wishes to call for assistance.

Supporters of the bill mostly included post-abortive women or those who work at pregnancy help centers. No one at the hearing testified or registered against the bill.

Witness after witness spoke about the physical, emotional, or financial coercion that they or those they counseled had experienced prior to aborting. Indeed, according to several national surveys of post-abortive American women, more than 60% felt pressured by others into having an abortion.

WCC Associate Director for Respect Life and Social Concerns, Barbara Sella, explained that the Catholic Church is well aware of the outside pressure that is brought to bear on women facing unplanned pregnancies. In her remarks to the Assembly Judiciary and Ethics Committee, Sella quoted Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *The Gospel of Life*:

As well as the mother, there are often other people too who decide upon the death of the child in the womb. In the first place, the father of the child may be to blame, not only when he directly pressures the woman to have an abortion, but also when he indirectly encourages such a decision on her part by leaving her alone to face the problems of pregnancy.... Nor can one overlook the pressures which sometimes come from the wider family circle and from friends. Sometimes the woman is subjected to such strong pressure that she feels psychologically forced to have an abortion: certainly in this case moral responsibility lies particularly with those who have directly or indirectly obliged her to have an abortion. (GL, 59)

Sella emphasized that being pro-life means actively helping pregnant women to overcome the many obstacles they face in these situations.

“Women who are experiencing an unplanned pregnancy deserve better,” Sella stated. “Women deserve to know that choosing life for their baby does not mean abandoning all hope for an education, for meaningful employment, and for a better life. They deserve to know that others will not only care enough to ask if abortion is what they really want, but will also help them find the proper resources to carry their baby to term.”

Sella concluded by repeating the recent remarks of Pope Benedict XVI: “I do not close my eyes,” he said, “to the difficulties and the conflicts which many women are experiencing, and I realize that the credibility of what we say also depends on what the Church herself is doing to help women in trouble.”