



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

STATEMENT ON INSURANCE MANDATE FOR CONTRACEPTIVE SERVICES

Dear brothers and sisters,

We are writing to you to share our deep concern about a provision in the new state budget that requires providers of health insurance to include contraceptive services as a “mandated benefit.”

This mandate will compel Catholic dioceses, parishes, and other agencies that buy health insurance to pay for a medical service that Catholic teaching holds to be gravely immoral. Contraception prevents the full and reciprocal self-giving that is essential to Christian marriage and diminishes the role of God, the giver of life, within marriage.

Only dioceses or agencies that are self insured, such as La Crosse and Superior, are not covered by this mandate.

As Catholic teachers and pastors, we strongly object to this blatant insensitivity to our moral values and legal rights.

Other states have similar requirements to include contraceptive services as a mandated benefit. Wisconsin, however, is now one of only a few states where the mandate fails to accommodate those whose religious or moral values are compromised by it.

This mandate violates not just our religious values, but also our constitutional rights. The right of conscience established in the Wisconsin Constitution protects the minority from the majority. That is to say, it protects all of us. For in our pluralistic society, every person, whatever his or her faith, is a member of a religious minority.

The constitutional right to religious freedom embraces more than just the right to hold private beliefs and affirm personal values. Such freedom also includes the ability to bear public witness to our values – by what we do and what we decline to do. It is such witness that changes hearts and transforms culture.

Nowhere does the Constitution say that the right of conscience is protected except in matters related to human reproduction. Nor does it limit the scope of religious freedom to tenets that conform to a party platform or to the agenda of powerful interest groups.

As citizens, we also object to the manner in which this law was adopted. Mandates of this kind deserve open debate and due deliberation. This mandate received neither. Processes consistent with open government permit competing arguments at public hearings. This process did not.

As we assess our options to contest this policy, we will continue to provide affordable access to quality health care for all who work for the Church.

Whatever course we pursue in this matter, we want all Catholics in Wisconsin to know that we will also continue to affirm and communicate the teachings of our faith. No legislation can repeal or annul our commitment to upholding the dignity of human life and the means by which each life is conceived.

We know that many of you find the teaching of our faith on contraception difficult to accept or live out in practice. As pastors and teachers, we find our conviction much reinforced because artificial contraception is not, in the first place, a "Catholic issue." Rather, the prohibition of artificial contraception is a principle of the natural moral law, which is inscribed in the mind and heart of all human beings. The bond between husband and wife, in their inseparable love-making and life creating Vocation, is evident to human reason itself – another powerful consideration which should lead our legislators to take very seriously our conviction. Many fail to recognize the truth of our conviction, not because they are irrational, but because, in our day and age, the fashionable proposition that there is no objective truth renders human reason itself directionless.

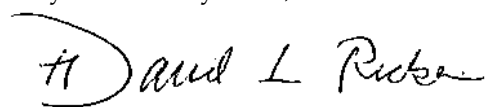
And so, it is incumbent on us as pastors and teachers to keep engaging you in charity. We commit ourselves to continue listening to your objections and to explaining the Church's understanding of human sexuality in such a manner that you may discover a greater understanding and appreciation of this teaching and the reasons for it.

This is no different from our ongoing efforts to help you form your consciences on opposition to the death penalty, justice for immigrants, and ethical approaches to economics.

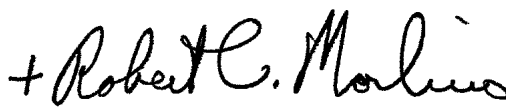
Sometimes, the Catholic Church's teaching can seem overly restrictive of human freedom. In reality, however, this teaching serves a greater freedom, not only for us as individuals, but also for society.

Our faith always challenges us. We are measured by how we respond to those challenges. We ask for your support and prayers as we respond to this one.

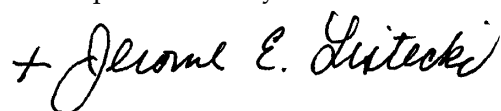
May God bless you all,



The Most Rev. David L. Ricken
Bishop of Green Bay



The Most Rev. Robert C. Morlino
Bishop of Madison



The Most Rev. Jerome E. Listecki
Bishop of La Crosse



The Most Rev. Peter F. Christensen
Bishop of Superior



The Most Rev. William P. Callahan
Archdiocesan Administrator
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