



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

**TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 173
PROHIBITION ON SELECTIVE ABORTIONS**
Presented to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
By Barbara Sella, Associate Director
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The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Wisconsin, urges you to support Senate Bill 173, which would ban selective abortions. The Catholic Church has always held that induced abortion is both immoral and cruel, because it treats some human lives as completely disposable. This bill seeks to inform women and the public about the value of all human life.

Senate Bill 173 prohibits abortions solely because of race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, or disability. In 2012, the Guttmacher Policy Review issued a paper on sex-selective abortions, which recognized the widespread use of such abortions in Asian countries.¹ The paper concluded that the real way to stop sex-selection abortions is not to prohibit such abortions, but to address the underlying conditions that can lead to them, namely an end to poverty and violence, and an increase in access to health care and education for women.

We agree that there is much work to be done on these underlying issues. The Catholic Church runs charities, hospitals, schools, and prison ministries precisely to assist the most vulnerable. Here in Wisconsin, the bishops have long supported efforts to expand educational opportunities, increase access to health care, improve wages and employment, increase housing, reform criminal justice, and welcome immigrants.

But serving the needs of the poor – as vital as it is – is not enough to halt the spread of selective abortions or abortion in general. For that to happen, a cultural shift must take place and the law can play an important part in that shift. The law signals what is and is not acceptable behavior. Choosing to abort based on sex, race, or disability is simply wrong.

True freedom is not absolute choice – a choice without limits. True freedom involves living in such a way that one does not deny freedom to others. SB 173 forces us to confront once again the question of what truly furthers respect for women: absolute freedom that would deny the right to life to a girl because she is not a boy, or an affirmation that her life is worthy of respect both inside and outside the womb.

This bill defends children, educates women and the public, and makes certain the State of Wisconsin does not support elective abortion. We urge you to support its passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

¹ <https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2012/05/problem-and-solution-mismatch-son-preference-and-sex-selective-abortion-bans>