



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILLS 174 & 187
Presented to the Senate Committee on Government Operations,
Technology and Consumer Protection
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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 174, A Woman's Right to Know Act, and Senate Bill 187, regarding Medical Assistance certification for abortion providers and their affiliates. The Catholic Church has always held that induced abortion is both immoral and cruel, because it treats some human lives as completely disposable. These bills seek to inform women and the public about the value of all human life.

Senate Bill 174, "A Woman's Right to Know Act"

Senate Bill 174 requires that a woman seeking an abortion via medication be informed that she may be able to continue her pregnancy if she seeks immediate medical assistance to counteract the effects of the first administration of the abortion drug.

The bill updates Wisconsin's informed consent laws in light of new medical practices. In the case of a medication abortion, there is growing evidence that it may be possible for a woman to reverse the effect of the first drug, mifepristone, by getting an injection of progesterone. Critics of this procedure say that it has not been scientifically proven to work. While more study may be needed to improve outcomes and better understand long-term impacts, the fact is that there are children alive in the world today because their mothers utilized this treatment option.

SB 174 also requires that abortion providers report additional information to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). Much of the discussion surrounding these two bills, as well as several other measures being heard today before Senate committees, would have been better served by greater access to data and information. By knowing how and why women seek abortions, we can learn more about the emotional, economic, social, psychological, and physical challenges women, parents, families, and children face in our society. Without data to track trends, how can we accurately assess whether women and families are truly being provided with all options? Abortion supporters herald the benefits of abortion. Surely then, they cannot object to the further gathering of evidence and information on how it is practiced. Women and the public have a right to know.

Senate Bill 187, Medical Assistance Certification

Senate Bill 187 prohibits the DHS from certifying a private abortion services provider or affiliate under the Medical Assistance program. SB 187 provides an exemption for facilities that perform

abortions in order to save the life of the mother, to prevent grave, long-lasting damage to her health due to a prior medical condition, or when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest.

This bill has a clear and straightforward objective - to affirm that funds held by public authorities are prohibited from being used to subsidize the performance of abortions. Since 1919, the bishops of the United States have been vocal advocates of the idea that all Americans should enjoy access to affordable health care, especially those who are vulnerable or of limited means. As the U.S. bishops stated in 1993, "Health care is more than a commodity; it is a basic human right, an essential safeguard of human life and dignity." We affirm that Wisconsin must continue to seek improved access to comprehensive health care services for those in need, especially women.

However, abortion and those entities that facilitate abortion do not reflect the respect for human dignity that should be at the core of all health care institutions. By prioritizing funding for those state and public health entities that do not perform abortions or are affiliated with such entities, SB 187 ensures that women's health care is devoted to prevention, diagnosis, and care, not termination of life.

Conclusion

These bills defend children, educate women and the public, and make certain the State of Wisconsin does not support elective abortion. We urge you to consider further improvements to these bills as outlined in this testimony and we urge you to support their passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.