



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

**TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 175
THE BORN ALIVE PROTECTION ACT
Presented to the Senate Committee on Judiciary & Public Safety
By Barbara Sella, Associate Director
May 7, 2019**

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Wisconsin, urges you to support Senate Bill 175, the Born Alive Protection Act. 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 175 does three very simple, yet necessary things. First, it establishes a standard of care for infants who survive an induced abortion. It does this by requiring that health care providers “exercise the same degree of professional skill, care, and diligence to preserve the life and health of the child as a reasonably diligent and conscientious health care provider would render to any other child born alive at the same gestational age.” And it ensures “that the child born alive is immediately transported and admitted to a hospital.”

Second, it sends a message to the medical profession and to the public at large that even though abortion may still be legal, for children outside of the womb, intentional neglect causing death is murder.

Third, it makes health care providers or employees mandatory reporters when violations occur.

Some have argued that this legislation is not necessary in Wisconsin. However, so long as there are those who advocate for abortion, who debase and devalue those who are vulnerable and who face challenges in life, there is a need to provide certainty that all born in Wisconsin have a right to life.

We must remember that the law is a teacher. It represents the collective conscience of the citizenry. The Born Alive Protection Act upholds the essential principle that every human life has dignity and should be treated equally by those to whom it is entrusted.

Finally, it is important to be specific about the number of lives that could be affected by this law. According to Wisconsin’s Department of Health Services (DHS), which provides an annual report on the number of induced abortions in the state, Wisconsin in 2017 reported 5,640 induced abortions. Of these, 52 (or less than 1 percent) were performed on children at or over 20 weeks

gestation.¹ It is these children who are the ones who might survive an attempted abortion, because an increasing number of children are viable even as early as 20 weeks. For example, a 2019 study has found that in Sweden, where neonatal care is more advanced than in the U.S., “For infants younger than 22 weeks, the survival rate has improved from 3.6 percent to 20 percent over the last decade, and for those born at 26 weeks, eight in 10 survive.”²

While the WCC supports this bill, there are ways in which it could be improved. First, since most late-term abortions are of children who are thought to have little chance of surviving more than a few days, weeks, or months, we believe that more information should be given to the birth parents regarding their options. They should be informed about advancements in maternal health and premature treatments and survival rates. Parents should have the option of utilizing perinatal hospice. This type of hospice cares for infants and their families when death may be imminent. Wisconsin is fortunate to have some excellent perinatal hospice programs. Too few parents, however, are aware of the support they could receive there.

Birth parents should also be informed about the demand for adoption of children with Down Syndrome and other serious, but not life-threatening, conditions. Finally, the State should require abortion providers to provide additional data on the complications related to abortion procedures, as well as the options provided to parents, so that lawmakers and citizens can have a better idea of what the abortion industry is doing.

This bill defends children, educates women, medical professionals, and the public, and makes certain the State of Wisconsin guarantees appropriate care for all children. We urge you to support its passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

¹ <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p45360-17.pdf> , p. 14.

² Cited in <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-03-sweden-world-extremely-preterm-babies.html>. The 2019 study: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2728924>