



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Members, Senate Committee on Government Operations, Legal Review and Consumer Protection

FROM: Barbara Sella, Associate Director for Respect Life and Social Concerns

DATE: October 14, 2021

RE: SB 503 Medicaid Abortions

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Wisconsin, urges you to support Senate Bill 503, which prohibits the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) from certifying a private abortion services provider or affiliate under the Medical Assistance program.

Senate Bill 503 includes exemptions 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. A similar bill, Senate Bill 504, does not include these exemptions. While the lives of those conceived in rape or incest are as valuable as any other, our position has always been that incremental change is better than no change.

Both bills have 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 reserving Medicaid funding for those providers that do not perform abortions, both bills ensure that women’s health care is devoted to prevention, diagnosis, and care, not to termination of life.

We support both SB 503 and SB 504, but for the purposes of this hearing, we urge you to advance SB 503.