



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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

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

DATE: February 8, 2022

RE: Senate Bill 923, Fetal Heartbeat

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The Wisconsin Catholic Conference, the public policy voice of the state's Catholic bishops, urges you to support Senate Bill 923, which requires testing for a fetal heartbeat before an abortion is performed and prohibits the abortion once a fetal heartbeat is detected, except when a medical emergency exists.

Science tells us that human life begins at conception and that it is in continual development from that moment until death. The first principal of Catholic social teaching is that every human being has intrinsic dignity and the right to life throughout its entire lifespan. Certainly, a fetal heartbeat provides undeniable evidence that a human being is alive in his or her mother's womb.

Abortion, by contrast, pits a mother against her unborn child and violently ends the life of an innocent and defenseless human life. In a civilized society, none of us has the absolute freedom to do what we wish with our own bodies, much less those of others. None of us has the right to solve a human problem by eliminating a human.

Having said this, we know that prohibitions on abortion will not stop all abortions. It is never enough just to outlaw injustice; society must also address the isolation, despair, and suffering that can give rise to injustice. Unless we change hearts and minds, unless we offer real alternatives, a sense of desperation will lead some women to seek self-abortions or abortions in states that enshrine abortion rights. This is why the Catholic Church has always paired its opposition to legal abortion with concrete assistance to those most in need. The Church's Catholic Charities agencies and Society of St. Vincent de Paul councils are dedicated to providing the assistance that women who face unwanted pregnancies deserve. In addition, our Catholic parishes are being mobilized through a new national initiative, *Walking with Moms in Need* ([www.walkingwithmoms.com](http://www.walkingwithmoms.com)), which asks all parishes in the U.S. to determine what pregnancy and parenting resources exist in their local communities, to support and publicize these resources, and to help fill the gaps that invariably exist. For women and men suffering due to past abortions, the Church also offers hope and healing through ministries such as Project Rachel (<https://hopeafterabortion.com>) and Rachael's Vineyard (<https://www.rachelsvineyard.org>). These are open to everyone, not just Catholics.

In the area of public policy, the WCC advocates for bills that assist women in the most vulnerable situations. This session alone, the WCC supports extending Medicaid eligibility for post-partum women to one year from the current 60 days, permitting newly married individuals to claim the Earned Income tax credit, and terminating tenancies for those who live in fear of domestic violence.

Today choosing life for an unborn baby must not mean abandoning all hope for an education, for meaningful employment, and for a better life. We must show pregnant women and their born and unborn children the utmost consideration, compassion, and tenderness so that they can all thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Please support passage of Senate Bill 923.