



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Senator André Jacque, Chair  
Members, Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution and Federalism

FROM: Tia Izzia, Associate Director for Human Life & Social Concerns

DATE: September 19, 2023

RE: Support for Senate Bills 300, 343, 344, 345, and 346

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The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Wisconsin, urges you to support the five bills before your committee today that truly empower and protect the dignity of human life in Wisconsin: Senate Bills 300, 343, 344, 345, and 346.

### **Senate Bill 300 *Abortion Activity Prohibition***

SB-300 has a clear and straightforward objective – to ensure that public funds, employees, and assets do not assist in the taking of human life. All too often, abortion is seen as a quick solution to human problems and framed as health care. It bears repeating that taking a human life cannot and can never be considered health care, for it is neither healthy nor caring. 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 activities that facilitate abortion, do not reflect the respect for human dignity that should be at the heart of everything a government does on behalf of its citizens. SB-300 does what government ought to do: protect the living.

### **Senate Bill 343 *Abortion Definition***

An abortion, or the intentional killing of a preborn child, is never medically necessary to save a woman’s life. SB-343 clarifies that a medical procedure designed to prevent the death of a pregnant woman, such as the removal of a miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy, is not an abortion. In rare instances, a medical procedure that saves a mother’s life has the unintended consequence of leading to a birth in which the child does not survive. In those cases, every effort is still made to save the child’s life, even though the child’s death may be an unintended consequence of the intervention. When the death of a preborn child is imminent, perinatal hospice and palliative care provide families with a nonviolent way to care for their child and grieve a premature death.<sup>1</sup> Catholic hospitals have led the way in caring for women and children in these very complicated cases and know how to care for both.

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<sup>1</sup> Perinatal Hospice and Palliative Care, [www.perinatalhospice.org/list-of-programs](http://www.perinatalhospice.org/list-of-programs).

**Senate Bill 344 *Dependent Tax Exemption***

SB-344 increases the dollar amount taxpayers can claim as an exemption for every dependent from \$700 to \$1,000 and extends that coverage not only to children aged 0-17, but also to preborn children. As any parent can tell you, costs begin to add up long before a baby arrives, from the cost of healthcare to preparing their home to welcome their child. Further, a woman experiencing medical complications during her pregnancy may need to take time off of work, which will likely be unpaid. Childcare rates too have hit Wisconsin families especially hard. As costs continue to climb, Wisconsin must take steps to support the economic well-being of families. SB-344 is a commonsense bill that can provide real support to families right now.

**Senate Bill 345 *Grants to Pregnancy Resource Centers***

For decades, Pregnancy Resource Centers (PRCs) have been on the ground helping to immediately respond to women's individual needs. A state that is committed to the welfare of women and children should assist these organizations that provide everything from material goods, parenting classes, and housing assistance. These organizations are adept at tailoring their assistance to the needs of each woman thus ensuring that no woman is left to shoulder her burdens alone. SB-345's critical funding will help countless women and families across Wisconsin.

**Senate Bill 346 *Financial Assistance for Adoption***

If a woman chooses to place her child for adoption, there should be no doubt in her mind that there is a family that can welcome and raise her child. However, for the many families willing and eager to adopt, the cost of adoption is often a steep barrier. For this reason, SB-346 creates an Adoption Financial Assistance Grant Program to make adoption a more affordable option for all Wisconsin families. Awards are limited to \$10,000 per family and may only be awarded to or on behalf of families in this state who are adopting children in this state.

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Each of these bills does what we need at this moment in history: to truly embrace both woman and child, rather than pitting them against each other. In the words of Pope Francis, we can never "solve a problem by eliminating a person" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 214). This is not a uniquely Catholic or even religious idea. This is just common sense.

And while these bills are crucial, much more needs to be done. Wisconsin must expand postpartum care, reduce costs for birth, eliminate racial disparities in maternal and infant mortality, support birth mothers, remove sales tax on feminine hygiene products and baby supplies, and more. Together, we can build an economy and society in Wisconsin where women and children can live safely and readily access the resources they need to thrive.