WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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WCC TESTIFIES IN SUPPORT OF ABORTION DEFINITION

On November 5, the Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of Wisconsin's Catholic bishops, testified in support of Senate Bill 553, which clarifies the definition of abortion in Wisconsin law.

Since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, there has been public confusion about when it is possible to intervene in a pregnancy with severe complications. In response, SB 553 offers a clear and comprehensive explanation of what is not an abortion. Abortion does not include a physician's performance of a medical procedure or treatment designed or intended to prevent the death of a pregnant woman and not designed or intended to kill her child. Abortion does not include an early induction or cesarean section performed due to a medical emergency, miscarriage, or stillbirth, or an ectopic, anembryonic, or molar pregnancy.

This bill clearly states what every pregnant woman in Wisconsin needs: for her physician to make reasonable medical efforts to preserve both her life and the life of her child, according to reasonable medical judgment and appropriate interventions for the gestational age of her child.

In her testimony, WCC Associate Director for Human Life & Social Concerns Tia Izzia explained that, "The practice of health care should be centered on caring for both patients—two distinct human beings—a woman and her child." In very 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. She continued, "Yet, even 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. Catholic hospitals have led the way in caring for women and children in these very complicated cases and know how to care for both.

Izzia continued, "Just laws distinguish between intentional and unintentional acts, even when the result of the act is the same.…Where human lives are concerned, this is all the more critical. Abortion is the *intentional* taking of a human life. If a child has already died in the womb, as in a miscarriage or stillbirth, removing that child is not taking its life. If a mother and child must be separated to save the mother's life, it is not intentionally taking a child's life when every effort is made to save them both."

Izzia concluded that the bill embraces 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."

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