

Wisconsin Catholic Conference: Urges legislators to oppose abortion expansion

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The Wisconsin Catholic Conference strongly urges legislators to oppose LRB-2151/1, legislation that would create an exception in Wisconsin's statute permitting children conceived in rape and incest to be killed, and expand abortion access in cases of fetal abnormality or risk to the mother.

All human life is sacred, and every individual deserves the right to life regardless of how she or he was conceived.

At the same time, and in every instance, sexual violence is a grave and detestable offense against human dignity. This legislation does not heal the trauma of rape and incest. Instead, abortion compounds violence upon violence. Children conceived in rape and incest are the most vulnerable of the most vulnerable. They deserve to be protected, not eliminated.

Survivors of sexual violence deserve appropriate care to heal, including trauma-informed healthcare, safe housing, and other supports. They deserve to have their perpetrators brought to justice.

Further, we know that perpetrators of rape and incest use abortion to cover up their crimes. A 2014 comprehensive study of survivors of sex trafficking found that half reported that "one or more of their abortions was at least partly forced upon them.

Rape and incest exceptions embolden criminals, put additional pressure on women to abort, and send the strong signal that those among us conceived in rape and incest are not as worthy of life as everyone else. All human life is of equal value, no

matter the circumstances of conception or birth.

There is no other area of the law where we say it is lawful to destroy the most vulnerable party for the crimes of another.

Intentionally killing an unborn child is never medically necessary to save the life of a mother. Catholic hospitals have led the way in caring for women and children in very complicated cases and know how to care for both. Sometimes 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. This is permissible because 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.

The bill also legalizes abortion in any circumstance in which the fetus has no chance of survival. This language is unduly vague and will lead to the destruction of children with fetal abnormalities. When the death of a newborn is imminent, perinatal hospice and palliative care provide families with a nonviolent way to care for their child and grieve a premature death. Wisconsin currently has five hospitals offering such assistance and more are needed.

Additionally, we urge legislators to oppose LRB 2056/1, which permits a pharmacist to prescribe and dispense hormonal contraceptive patches and self-administered oral hormonal contraceptives. This is a bill the WCC opposed in past legislative sessions and will oppose again because of the health concerns involved.

We implore all legislators to take the lead in protecting the life and health of both women and their children in Wisconsin. This can and should include the expansion of postpartum care, reducing costs for birth, removal of sales tax on feminine hygiene products and diapers, funding for pregnancy resource centers, adoption tax credits, and more. If Wisconsin is to be a place where women and children can flourish, these are the kinds of policies that are essential.

In 1849, Wisconsin banned abortion and in 1853, it abolished the death penalty. Our state was truly ahead of its time in recognizing the value of every human life and opposing state-sanctioned violence.

Let us build on that respect for life and refuse to pit a woman against her preborn child. Let us build a Wisconsin where women and children can live in safety and access the resources they need to thrive.