



The Sanctity of Human Life: Oppose House Bill 6205

The Bishop's document *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* tells us, "In our nation, 'abortion and euthanasia have become preeminent threats to human dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental human good and the condition for all others' (*Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 5). It is a mistake with grave moral consequences to treat the destruction of innocent human life merely as a matter of individual choice.

What is the issue?

HB 6205 represents a **RADICAL** departure from current Illinois law. The legislation requires public funding of abortion and contraception, undermines the Health Care Right of Conscience and Parental Notification statutes, provides special immunity protections to those performing abortions and requires "comprehensive" sex education be taught in every public school.

Why is this important to Catholics?

Human life is sacred and is to be respected and protected. The sad fact in Illinois is that a girl or woman of any age can procure an abortion for nearly any reason. The effect of this bill is to ensure every citizen's participation in that terrible system. We will not.

What is the solution?

We must defeat of House Bill 6205. Your opposition should be based on the following:

Section 15 of the legislation states that notwithstanding any other current law (Healthcare Right of Conscience Act and Parental Notification of Abortion Act) neither the state nor any political subdivision may "interfere" with access to abortion. This section is designed to set up legal challenges to undermine the Health Care Right of Conscience and Parental Notification Acts.

Section 20 requires the public funding of abortions via state Medicaid and other state medical assistance programs, perhaps even including state employee's health insurance plans. In addition to abortion, this section will require these programs to pay for other "reproductive healthcare" – including contraception, in vitro fertilization, fertility treatments, etc. Moreover, **Section 25** affords medical professionals performing abortions unprecedented liability protections.

Section 30 mandates public school districts to offer comprehensive sex education. In addition, the bill amends the Comprehensive Health Education Program to delete references to abstinence "until marriage." This Program applies to public and private schools, meaning Catholic schools could not teach the subject in a manner consistent with Catholic values.

Section 35 requires the law and subsequent rules to be "liberally construed." Our reading is not too broad.

CATHOLICS *at the* CAPITOL

Restore Funding To Important Education Programs

The Catholic Conference of Illinois (CCI), representing Illinois' 510 Catholic schools urge support for funding three long-standing education programs funded by the state.

What is the issue?

The state's miserable fiscal condition led to significant cuts in three education programs important to public and Catholic schools: the Illinois Textbook Loan, Educational Improvement and School Safety Block Grant, and Parent Transportation Reimbursement Programs.

Why is this important to Catholics?

These programs provide significant financial support to Catholic schools. The parents of Catholic school students and all Catholics are taxpayers. Our money is used to fund public schools, and yet our tuition rates continue to rise. The state has a responsibility to ensure the children of Illinois have access to excellent educational opportunities and can do so through the continuation of these programs.

What is the solution?

All three educational programs should have funding restored in the next fiscal year:

Illinois Textbook Loan Program: this program was authorized in 1975, and its purpose is to provide secular instructional materials, textbooks, and computer software, to public and nonpublic students grades K-12. Fully funded, the program provides approximately \$40 per student to use for the purchase of approved materials, and serves every grade on a two-year cycle: Kindergarten thru 6 one year; grades 7 thru 12 the next. **House Bill 6096** and **Senate Bill 3530** have been introduced to restore \$29.1 million in funding to the Illinois Textbook Loan Program. Please consider co-sponsoring these important bills.

Educational Improvement and School Safety (ADA) Block Grant: this grant program provides public and nonpublic schools flexible resources to meet otherwise unfunded mandates. In Fiscal Year 2009, this program was funded at \$74.8 million and broke down to approximately \$36 a student; in this fiscal year, funding was cut by 75 percent.

Illinois Parent/Guardian State Pupil Transportation Reimbursement Program: this program was authorized in 1986 and has provided financial assistance to public and nonpublic school families, grades K-12, to whom free bussing is not provided or available. In Fiscal Year 2009, the program was funded at \$12.1 million for an average reimbursement of \$100 per pupil; in this fiscal year, funding was reduced to zero.



Defense of Marriage: Oppose Senate Bill 1716

Marriage is a faithful, exclusive, lifelong union of a man and a woman joined in an intimate community of life and love. They commit themselves completely to each other and to the wondrous responsibility of bringing children into the world and caring for them. The call to marriage is woven deeply into the human spirit.

What is the issue?

For some time, there have been efforts to allow same-sex couples to marry or join in civil unions that encompass all the rights and privileges afforded to married couples. If enacted into law, this effort would have the effect of redefining marriage so as to make other relationships equivalent to it.

The Catholic Church affirms the God-given dignity of every human life and rejects unjust discrimination. There is no place for arbitrary discrimination and prejudice against a person. Rather, the objection to same-sex marriages or civil unions is the redefinition of marriage to include any relationship. The institution of marriage cannot be devalued and further weakened. Across times, cultures, and very different religious beliefs, marriage is the foundation of the family. The family, in turn, is the basic unit of society, and marriage is a personal relationship with public significance. Marriage must be defined and protected as a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman, and as the source of the next generation and the protective haven for children. The state rightly recognizes the marital relationship between one man and one woman as a public institution in its laws because the relationship makes a unique and essential contribution to the common good.

Why is this important to Catholics?

Marriage is both a natural institution and a sacred union because it is rooted in the divine plan for creation. In addition, the Church teaches that the valid marriage of baptized Christians is a sacrament—a saving reality. Jesus Christ made marriage a symbol of his love for his Church (see Eph 5:25-33). This means that a sacramental marriage lets the world see, in human terms, something of the faithful, creative, abundant, and self-emptying love of Christ. A true marriage in the Lord with his grace will bring the spouses to holiness. Their love, manifested in fidelity, passion, fertility, generosity, sacrifice, forgiveness, and healing, makes known God's love in their family, communities, and society.

What is the solution?

Laws play an educational role insofar as they shape patterns of thought and behavior, particularly about what is socially permissible and acceptable. Therefore, the General Assembly must not further devalue marriage as merely one among many social relationships. Senate Bill 1716 should be defeated.



House Bill 5743: The Ultrasound Opportunity Act

The Bishop's document *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* tells us, "In our nation, 'abortion and euthanasia have become preeminent threats to human dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental human good and the condition for all others' (*Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 5). It is a mistake with grave moral consequences to treat the destruction of innocent human life merely as a matter of individual choice. A legal system that violates the basic right to life on the grounds of choice is fundamentally flawed.

What is the issue?

Illinois imposes no real regulation on obtaining or performing an abortion. In 2008, there were 47,717 abortions in Illinois, a slight increase from the previous year. It is estimated that 11.3 percent (or 5,250 abortions a year) are conducted after the first trimester. Anyone, from this state or not, can procure an abortion at almost any stage of pregnancy for any reason. Even broadly supported measures such as a parental notification have not yet been implemented in Illinois. It's time for change.

Every mother and father should have the opportunity to see the image of their baby in the womb, and every human has the right to be recognized, before the decision to terminate a life is made. That is the goal of the Ultrasound Opportunity Act.

If HB 5743 is enacted into law, every abortion provider in Illinois will have to offer a pregnant woman seeking an abortion an opportunity to view an ultrasound of her unborn child on site or from a provided list of local ultrasound providers. We believe this requirement will aid women and men involved in the pain-staking decision of abortion access to better information and understanding. The bill imposes no punishment on the parent of the child.

Why is this important to Catholics?

Human life is sacred and is to be respected and protected. Advocating for public policies that provide information to those who are considering an abortion is one of the most effective ways to reduce the incidence of abortion. Every Catholic and person of goodwill should desire the reduction in the number of abortions. Research to this end has suggested that ultrasound, and the incredible images of innocent life produced, may be one of the most effective tools.

What is the solution?

The General Assembly should pass House Bill 5743.

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Expand School Choice: Support Senate Bill 2494

The Declaration of Christian Education (*Gravissimum Educationis*) proclaimed by Pope Paul VI in October of 1965, accurately defines the Catholic view of parental rights in education and the responsibility the government shares in protecting such rights:

“Parents who have the primary and inalienable right and duty to educate their children must enjoy true liberty in their choice of schools. Consequently, the public power, which has the obligation to protect and defend the rights of citizens, must see to it, in its concern for distributive justice, that public subsidies are paid out in such a way that parents are truly free to choose according to their conscience the schools they want for their children.”

What is the issue?

State Senator James Meeks (D-Chicago), also the pastor of Chicago’s Salem Baptist Church, came out in December for a school voucher system. He introduced Senate Bill 2494 to provide state-funded vouchers for the parents of children attending the worst public schools in Chicago to offset the cost of tuition at nearby private schools if and when parents decide to move their children. Frustration with Chicago public schools’ failing test scores, dropout rates and persistent violence led him to conclude a different approach was worth exploring.

Why is this important to Catholics?

In addition to the view that parents are the primary educators of their children and deserve the support of the state in choosing the best educational opportunities for their children, the Archdiocese of Chicago also administers the largest network of parochial schools in the nation. This legislation will empower parents while providing financial assistance to Catholic schools maintaining excellent standards and performance. If enacted, the system of vouchers set up by this legislation will prove successful over time, and CCI will work to expand the program to communities statewide.

What is the solution?

The General Assembly should pass Senate Bill 2494.

CATHOLICS *at the* CAPITOL

English and Adult Education for Immigrants

The human dignity of every person is to be respected. We are called to solidarity with the vulnerable and those in need. The Gospel calls on us to “welcome the stranger.” In welcoming those working to assimilate in American culture, we support increased opportunities for adult education and to learn English.

What is the issue?

English proficiency is a key element for those trying to integrate in their communities and work, and adult education helps better prepare individuals to succeed on the job. Moreover, many jobs demand advanced learning and English skills. However, in the current budget year, many programs will be looked to for cuts in funding. English and adult education is vital to ensuring that immigrants are able to provide for their families and contribute to their communities. Funding to these programs must continue and should not be cut.

Furthermore, opportunities for English and adult learning need to be part of a system that is more effective and collaborative with communities and parishes, so that individuals can better access programs that meet their needs in order to gain English proficiency, job readiness, and advanced learning.

Why is this important to Catholics?

We are a nation of immigrants. In recognizing that the human dignity of all must be respected and enhanced, the Catholic Church has a long tradition of welcoming and supporting immigrants. They are our brothers and sisters, and they bring a richness and vitality to our communities. Increasing opportunities for adult education and to learn English will enhance participation and contributions to the Church and our communities.

What is the solution?

Funding through the Illinois Community College Board for English and adult education should be maintained in FY 2011, especially to leverage every available federal dollar.

In addition, funding through the Department of Human Services for the We Want to Learn English program should continue. This program provides greater access to learn English through community-based English classes where immigrants live and work.

CATHOLICS *at the* CAPITOL

Maintain the Social Services Safety Net

While the common good embraces all, those who are weak, vulnerable, and most in need deserve preferential concern. A basic moral test of our society is how we treat the most vulnerable in our midst. In a society marred by deepening disparities between rich and poor, Scripture gives us the story of the Last Judgment and reminds us that we will be judged by our response to the “least among us.”

What is the issue?

Private social service providers, including Catholic Charities of Illinois and other Catholic human services agencies, contract with the State of Illinois to provide important human services to the most vulnerable. These include services such as foster care and adoption for children, youth services, emergency assistance and shelter for individuals and families, and assistance to the elderly, just to name a few. Collectively, they serve over 1 million families and individuals through more than 200 programs.

Human services are looked to most often when budget cuts are made and often face threats of severe reductions in funding. Last year, critical services to children, elderly, and the poor faced potential cuts of 50 percent or more, but fortunately were saved from such severe cuts last year. The state will encounter further budget challenges this year, and cuts to social services are again a possibility. Budget cuts to programs that already face continually rising costs will lead to reductions in much-needed services to the most vulnerable. Foster children will not receive counseling or supportive services that they need, the poor will not receive assistance they need to secure housing or provide food for their families, and the elderly will not receive the care they need to remain in their homes or to prevent abuse or neglect.

Why is this important to Catholics?

We are called to promote the common good and give preferential concern to the poor and vulnerable. Catholic Charities of Illinois and other Catholic organizations, under their contracts with the State of Illinois, provide critical social services to the most poor and vulnerable among us. Without assistance from these agencies, where would those in need go?

What is the solution?

There should be no cuts to human services funding in FY 2011, as cuts in funding now will cost the State and our communities much more in the future. As budget decisions are made, nonprofit agencies should be included in discussions to ensure the poor, children, and the elderly are not put at risk.

CATHOLICS *at the* CAPITOL

House Bill 5687 and Senate Bill 3569: Abolition of the Death Penalty

Human life is sacred. The dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Catholic teaching about the dignity of life calls us to oppose abortion, embryonic stem cell research, torture, unjust war, and the use of the death penalty; to prevent genocide and attacks against noncombatants; to oppose racism; and to overcome poverty and suffering.

What is the issue?

While a moratorium of the death penalty was instituted by then - Governor Ryan in 2000, meaning that no executions by the State would take place while a review of the death penalty and related issues were studied, there are now attempts to lift the moratorium and resume the death penalty. The moratorium was instituted because of serious flaws in the criminal justice system and findings of innocent people who had received a death penalty sentence. At this time, the moratorium is still in place, yet serious flaws still remain in the criminal justice system.

Ten years after the moratorium was first imposed, there are still many problems involved in the imposition of the ultimate punishment of the death penalty. Not all the problems and abuses of the system can be prevented. There are remaining questions about the effectiveness of some of the reforms that requires further study. There is still the potential for wrongful convictions. In addition, the potential also remains for the death penalty to be imposed unfairly and arbitrarily. Factors such as race, quality of legal defense, and other social factors may continue to affect considerations during sentencing.

Why is this important to Catholics?

Human life is sacred and is to be respected and protected. Under the current means available in our society, the death penalty is not necessary because the safety of others and protection and defense of human life can be accomplished through alternatives, such as sentences of life imprisonment. While the families and loved ones of victims do require our compassion and support, continued imposition of the death penalty, in light of available alternatives, only brings an illusion of justice. We have the capability to both protect society and punish serious offenders without taking their lives. The use of the death penalty when there are other means to protect our society weakens the respect for all human life.

What is the solution?

The General Assembly should pass House Bill 5687/Senate Bill 3569 to abolish the death penalty in Illinois.