



Testimony in Opposition to House Bill No. 7442
R. I. House of Representatives
Committee on Finance
May 19, 2022

Dear Chairman Abney and Honorable Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 7442 on behalf of the Rhode Island Catholic Conference, the public policy advocacy and educational agency of the Diocese of Providence.

House Bill No. 7442 seeks to provide abortion coverage in the Medicaid program and repeal the abortion coverage exclusion for state employee insurance plans. The Conference opposes House Bill No. 7442 because it would use taxpayer dollars for the objectionable practice of abortion, which ends the life of an unborn human being. We advocate the R.I. General Assembly instead direct the expenditure of these monies toward producing healthy birth outcomes and providing income security to decrease the perceived need for abortions.

The Catholic Church firmly believes in the dignity of human life from natural conception to natural death, including that of all unborn children. This bill would be a step in the wrong direction to protecting unborn children and their mothers from the violence of abortion.

Pope Francis states: "*Among the vulnerable for whom the Church wishes to care with particular love and concern are unborn children, the most defenseless and innocent among us. Nowadays, efforts are made to deny them their human dignity and to do with them whatever one pleases, taking their lives and passing laws preventing anyone from standing in the way of this. It is not 'progressive' to resolve problems by eliminating a human life.*"

Limiting abortion funding can only help to lessen the tragedy of abortion for both women and their unborn children in our state. As the late U.S. Senator Humbert Humphrey once stated: "*The moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.*"

A "moral test" of our state government is how we choose to support economically poor pregnant women and their unborn children. Enabling tax dollars to fund abortion is an abject failure of such a moral test. The R.I. General Assembly should instead be offering a choice and alternative to enable both the expectant mother and their unborn child to live and prosper.

It is incumbent upon our legislators to seek to pass laws that treat mothers and their unborn children with respect and dignity due to all human beings. They proposed legislation treats economically disadvantaged pregnant mothers and their unborn children as an economic burden to be disposed of simply because they live in poverty.



Those who advocate for abortion suggest that it is cheaper to abort the children born into poverty than to support pregnant mothers and care for their newborn infants after birth. They have suggested that the public funding of the destruction of unborn children through abortion produces a savings in the state budget. Such was the finding of the R. I. State Budget Office analysis produced on March 24, 2021. *“Rhode Island could potentially save \$5.4 million a year in taxpayer dollars if it removed the current legal barrier to abortion coverage for state workers and others who depend upon the state for the health insurance plans.”* (Repealing ban on abortion coverage for state workers, others will save money, The Providence Journal, May 5, 2022)

Yet, as a caring and compassionate society, we must provide the necessities to sustain life—adequate housing, nutrition, clothing, education, employment, healthcare, prenatal care, postnatal care, and childcare for *“those who are in the shadows of life.”* For women who live in poverty, abortion is a desperate act, not an act of choice. Advocating for the destruction of human life to save funds in the state budget is a cold and calculating policy that seeks to imitate the coercive abortion policies of China and North Korea. It is truly devoid of any sense of morality and must be rejected.

The R.I. Catholic Conference works to foster a culture of life by advocating for laws that uphold the dignity of the human person, the sanctity of human life and assist pregnant women in need while working to ensure the State sets and enforces safe standards for women’s health care. For these reasons, the R.I. Catholic Conference respectfully urges the committee to reject House Bill No. 7442.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

The Very Reverend Bernard A. Healey
Director
Rhode Island Catholic Conference
One Cathedral Square
Providence, RI 02903
401-278-4525
BHealey@dioceseofprovidence.org