



Massachusetts Catholic Conference
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March 11, 2024

Hon. Michael Day, House Chair
Joint Committee on Judiciary
State House
24 Beacon St, Room 136
Boston, MA 02133

Hon. James Eldridge, Senate Chair
Joint Committee on Judiciary
State House
24 Beacon St, Room 511-C
Boston, MA 02133

Re: HB1599 *“An Act enhancing access to abortion care.”*

Dear Chairmen Day and Eldridge,

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference is the public policy office of the Catholic Church in the state representing the Archdiocese of Boston along with the Dioceses of Fall River, Springfield, and Worcester. Please accept this letter on behalf of the Bishops of Massachusetts in strong opposition to House Bill 1599 currently pending before the Joint Committee on Judiciary.

The teaching of the Catholic Church is that life begins at conception and ends with natural death. The Church at all times holds firm to that teaching so as to promote the preservation of life and to create a culture of respect for life as the foundation of a just and moral society.

House Bill 1599 would erode that respect for life by dramatically expanding the current abortion laws. For example, it would target minors and their parents or guardians, eliminate certain procedural safeguards, and remove the “conscientious objection” protections from doctors and nurses.

Specifically, the bill would:

- 1.) Eliminate the parental consent and judicial by-pass requirement for a minor under 16 years of age seeking an abortion leaving the minor alone to decide a monumental life changing event.
- 2.) Under certain circumstances, eliminate the medical profession “conscientious objection” provision of the law thus requiring those professional to perform an abortion against their will.

- 3.) Eliminate the category of individuals who can perform an abortion at 24 weeks or less (physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner and nurse mid-wife) by replacing it with a yet to be defined "provider" category.
- 4.) Similarly, eliminates the requirement for a physician to perform abortions after 24 weeks of pregnancy with the identical "provider" language.
- 5.) Eliminate the current law which requires that life sustaining equipment be in the room for abortions performed after 24 weeks in the event of a live birth.
- 6.) Delegitimizes all crisis pregnancy centers and ignores the Catholic Church's work for the past 40 years assisting women experiencing difficult pregnancies - particularly the assistance provided to the poor and minority communities.

While the concerns detailed above are not all encompassing, it provides a clear picture of how HB1599 would further erode the culture of life in Massachusetts. The Roman Catholic Bishops of Massachusetts urge you and your colleagues to reject the bill in its entirety.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James F. Driscoll". Below the signature, the initials "(J.F.D.)" are written in a smaller, less legible cursive.

James Driscoll
Executive Director