

New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops



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New Mexico Conference of Bishops

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STATEMENT

New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops Support a Consistent Ethic of Life

Opposition to New Mexico House Bill 51

New Mexico House Bill 90

New Mexico Senate Bill 153

ALBUQUERQUE- IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Thursday, February 7, 2019 – We, the bishops of New Mexico, strongly voice opposition to proposed bills HB 51 (Decriminalization of Abortion), HB 90 and SB 153 (Legalization of Assisted Suicide). We support a consistent ethic of life. We have studied the legislation through the lens of the Gospel and Catholic moral and social teaching. We stand unified against any legislation that weakens the defense of life and threatens the dignity of the human being.

HB 51 aims to repeal the New Mexico state statute that criminalizes abortion. While the law is currently not enforced due to federal legalization of abortion through the Supreme Court's ruling on *Roe v. Wade*, two parts of statute (the conscience clause and requirement of the doctor) are *not* void by the US Supreme Court and *are* enforced. We oppose HB 51 and urge our legislators to protect the conscience of our healthcare workers and protect women by maintaining the conscience clause and requirement of the doctor.

We are in agreement that criminalization of abortion should not target women, many of whom find themselves in personal or financially dire circumstances. But abortion also targets and victimizes another deeply vulnerable population: unborn children and future generations. The state of New Mexico must strive to protect and uphold the dignity of all people, from conception to natural death, and any effort to permit the killing of unborn children violates the sanctity of every human person.

New Mexico consistently ranks low or last among other states in education results, economic opportunities, poverty, and childhood health. An abortion will not fix the obstacles many women and families face, such as economic instability, access to education, and a higher standard of living. We encourage our legislators to turn their efforts away from promoting abortion, and instead to policies and legislation which would promote the prosperity of human life at all stages of development.

We would strongly oppose any clauses or measures that would punish doctors and health care workers for refusing to participate in abortion procedures or other medical services that violate their beliefs, religious or otherwise.

As Pope St. John Paul II says, *“Even in the midst of difficulties and uncertainties, every person sincerely open to truth and goodness can, by the light of reason and the hidden action of grace, come to recognize in the natural law written in the heart (cf. Rom 2:14-15) the sacred value of human life from its very beginning until its end, and can affirm the right of every human being to have this primary good respected to the highest degree. Upon the recognition of this right, every human community and the political community itself are founded.”* (Encyclical [*Evangelium Vitae*](#), n. 2).

For these very reasons, we also oppose HB 90 and SB 153 which legalizes assisted suicide. We must protect the dignity of the human being at all stages of life. This proposed legislation creates a detrimental consequence of death that may be based on human error. These two bills would allow for the assisted suicide of people who have been given a prognosis of six months to live, which only has a 20% accuracy of prediction of death within said six months. This means that patients are subject to an 80% chance of an inaccurate diagnosis resulting in life taken based on human error.¹ When we supported the repeal of the death penalty, arguments were made by legislators that the death penalty was not acceptable because of the chance of human error. We cannot have legislators ignore the greater chance of error in assisted suicide.

The solution to suffering is not the elimination of the sufferer, but rather quality healthcare and palliative care. This is the area where we should all come together to support remedies such as healthcare for all. It is unethical for New Mexico as a society to stand idle and see residents of our state go without healthcare coverage or adequate healthcare coverage throughout their life delaying early detection, treatment or prevention of illness, such as cancer. When faced with life-threatening diagnoses, it would be unethical to offer them a prescription for death. It is only through a consistent ethic of life and in supporting the essentials of life that we will achieve the common good.

We encourage readers of this letter to make their voices heard on these issues by contacting their legislator at the following link: nmlegis.gov/Members/Find_My_Legislator--END

¹ Extent and determinants of error in physicians' prognoses in terminally ill patients, Western Journal of Medicine 2000 May; 172(5): 310-313