

CATHOLICS *at the* CAPITOL

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The Catholic Church in Illinois advocates for many important issues based on Catholic Social Teaching.

House Bill 6205 - Reproductive Health and Access Act (IL FOCA). This legislation 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. **Oppose House Bill 6205.**

Education Funding Issues. The state's poor fiscal condition led to significant cuts in education programs important to Catholic schools. CCI has and will continue to advocate for restored funding to the Illinois Textbook Loan, Educational Improvement and School Safety Block Grant, and Parent Transportation Reimbursement Programs. **Support House Bill 6096 and Senate Bill 3530.**

Senate Bill 1716 - Civil Unions/Religious Freedom. This legislation would provide benefits, associated with marriage, to a civil union defined as a legal relationship between 2 persons of either the same or opposite sex. Marriage exists between a man and a woman, as husband and wife, and should remain the only marital union that is legally valid or recognized. **Oppose Senate Bill 1716.**

House Bill 5743 - The Ultrasound Opportunity Act. This legislation would require abortion facilities to offer pregnant woman an opportunity to view a sonogram of her unborn child on site or at a local provider. **Support House Bill 5743.**

Senate Bill 2494 - Tuition Vouchers. Senator James Meeks (D-Chicago) introduced this legislation to give students in the worst inner-city Chicago public schools vouchers to instead attend nearby private schools. We believe parents are the primary educators of their children and the state should do all it can to offer the best educational opportunities possible. **Support Senate Bill 2494.**

Support English and Adult Education for Immigrants. English proficiency and adult education assist immigrants to better integrate and participate in their communities and work. **Support maintenance of state funding for English and adult education.**

Maintain the Social Services Safety Net. Last year, social services were at risk of severe funding cuts. Considering the economic challenges the state continues to face, human services are again in danger. However, care to the poor and vulnerable must be a priority, and the State should foster partnerships with nonprofit agencies as budget decisions for human services are made. **Oppose cuts to human services funding.**

House Bill 5687 and Senate Bill 3569 - Abolish the Death Penalty. CCI supports the abolition of the death penalty in Illinois. The safety of others and protection and defense of human life can be accomplished through alternatives to the death penalty, such as sentences of natural life. House Bill 5687 and Senate Bill 3569, if enacted, will replace the death penalty with life in prison without the possibility of parole. **Support House Bill 5687 and Senate Bill 3569.**

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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.

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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**.