

March 11, 2015

To: Montana House Human Services Committee

From: Matthew Brower, Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference

Re: Testimony in support of HB 479

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Matt Brower [B R O W E R] and I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference. The Montana Catholic Conference serves as the public policy arm of the Roman Catholic Church in Montana and I speak on behalf of the two Roman Catholic bishops in Montana from the Diocese of Helena and the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings.

I am here today to voice our support for House Bill 479.

The Roman Catholic Church consistently affirms the inherent dignity of the human person and the sacredness of every human life from the moment of conception through natural death. This foundational principle must serve as the bedrock of every just and moral society.

From this recognition of the inherent dignity enjoyed by all persons, flows an understanding of and appreciation for the basic rights and protections to which all human beings, including unborn children, ought to be entitled. Unborn children are the most vulnerable and voiceless members of the human family and they deserve adequate safeguards against painful medical procedures—procedures over which they have no say and no control. We would desire the same for ourselves and, as a civilized society we ought to require the same for the most helpless among us, including the unborn.

While it is true that the ability to feel pain does not endow one with humanity, nor does the inability to feel pain make one less human, it does serve as a point of delineation from which justice demands that the law provide certain protections that respect the dignity of the individual, in this case, the unborn child. House Bill 479 takes meaningful steps to provide for the unborn a basic protection to which they are entitled.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, on behalf of the Montana Catholic Conference, I urge a “do pass” and thank you for your time.