

Fighting to Keep Conscience Protections in Place

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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OSF HealthCare is taking a leadership role in an effort to keep conscience protections in place and protect the sanctity of life.

During a news conference Thursday, March 28, in Springfield, Illinois, OSF HealthCare joined Illinois' six Catholic bishops to voice displeasure with legislation working its way through the Illinois General Assembly that would dramatically alter existing abortion law and repeal the state's Parental Notice of Abortion Act.

The so-named Reproductive Health Act, House Bill 2495/Senate Bill 1942, calls for a complete overhaul of the state's abortion laws, stripping the unborn child of any rights while removing well established conscience protections for hospitals, doctors and other health care professionals. House Bill 2467/Senate Bill 1594 removes the parental notification law for minors seeking abortion.

"We must view this proposed legislation as the latest attack on human dignity, motivated by the dominant cultural ethic that asserts the lives of unborn children have no value and sanctity when weighed against the wishes and needs of others," said Cardinal Blase Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago. "Against such mounting challenges to human dignity, it is critically important that each of us, but especially our elected leaders, defend the inherent and inalienable value of every human life."

Joining Cardinal Cupich at the podium were: Bishop Daniel Jenky, C.S.C., Diocese of Peoria; Bishop Edward Braxton, Diocese of Belleville; Bishop Thomas John Paprocki, Diocese of Springfield; Bishop R. Daniel Conlon, Diocese of Joliet; and Bishop David Malloy, Diocese of Rockford.

OSF HealthCare obstetrician and gynecologist Dr. Jillian Stalling addressed those gathered in her role as Illinois director of the Catholic Medical Association and as a member of the Illinois Catholic Healthcare Association. Dr. Stalling spoke to the provisions of the legislation that would remove long established conscience protections that protect hospitals, doctors and other medical professionals from having to perform an abortion based on their deeply held religious beliefs. If Adopted, HB 2495 and Senate Bill 1942 will remove these long established protections.

"As physicians, we take an oath to do no harm. We offer patients an objective treatment plan based upon medical training and scientific testing. It has been a longstanding practice to respect doctors' rights of conscience when they are asked to perform a morally objectionable procedure. I am alarmed by the statement in the legislation that an embryo or fetus has no independent rights. This is exploitive language that can be used to attack any legislation that protects the unborn," said Dr. Stalling. "I love taking care of women and delivering babies. If this legislation passes, I am not going to leave the medical profession and abandon women who need good health care. But I will refuse to participate in an abortion."

Chris Manson, Vice President of Government Relations at OSF HealthCare reiterated that this issue is one of OSF HealthCare's top legislative priorities.

"This issue will continue to be a top legislative priority for OSF HealthCare and we will continue to work with like minded individuals and organizations to defend the most vulnerable among us while also protecting our ability to operate our hospitals and practices in a manner consistent with our deeply held religious beliefs."

Both measures have been introduced in their respective chambers and are awaiting their first hearings, with no dates set at this time.