



Diocese of Joliet

Office of the Bishop

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Once again, there is legislation in Springfield that would violate personal conscience to pay for the killing of the unborn with public money.

The so-called "Reproductive Health and Access Act" has been re-introduced in the Illinois General Assembly as House Bill 6205. You may recall last year's version of this legislation, which sought to undermine healthcare workers' rights of conscience, nullify the existing regulations of abortion, publicly fund abortions and mandate comprehensive sex education. We had hoped that last year's widespread public opposition, and the inability of the proponents to advance their legislation to a vote, would dissuade policy makers from again proposing such an extreme and out of touch position.

This year's legislation has been amended so that its most egregious demand is the use of public money to pay for all "reproductive health services." These services include abortion, emergency contraception without pregnancy testing, and in-vitro fertilization for all Medicaid recipients, people on state health insurance plans, and any other programs providing state "medical assistance." If this legislation becomes law, money you send to state government to meet the shared needs of society will instead be used to fund abortion and emergency contraception without pregnancy testing. At the very least, to add this kind of expense to the budget now is irresponsible.

House Bill 6205 violates the conscientious objection of many citizens. In 1844, Abraham Lincoln broke with his own party, the often anti-Catholic Whigs, and proposed: "Resolved, that the guarantee of the rights of conscience, as found in our Constitution, is most sacred and inviolable, and one that belongs no less to the Catholic, than to the Protestant; and that all attempts to abridge or interfere with these rights, either of Catholic or Protestant, directly or indirectly, have our decided disapprobation, and shall ever have our most effective opposition." Lincoln's position is as valid today as it was last year and in 1844. The tax dollars of Catholics and many other conscientious people must not be used to subsidize the taking of innocent human life.

Accordingly, we again ask you to make your voice heard in Springfield. Please contact your elected representatives this week and urge them to oppose House Bill 6205. If your representative indicates that they oppose the legislation please thank them.

To find out the identity and contact information of your state representative in Springfield, go to Legislator Lookup at www.ilga.gov or call the Catholic Conference of Illinois at 312-368-1066. Thank you and God bless you. May the season of Lent bring all of us closer to the mercy of God.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. Peter Sartain
Bishop of Joliet

Joseph M. Siegel
Auxiliary Bishop of Joliet