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Committee Hears Two Abortion Bills

February 27, 2013 JEFFERSON CITY, MO – On Wednesday, February 27, the Missouri House of Representatives Health Care Policy Committee heard two house bills regarding abortion issues.

Tyler McClay, general counsel for the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC), testified in strong support of HB 177 and 298.

House Bill 177 places what bill sponsor Representative Andrew Koenig (R-Winchester) said are “reasonable restrictions on chemical abortions.” Koenig said the bill has been heard the last two years and made it as far as a passing vote in the Missouri House last year.

HB 177 would establish the Abortion-inducing Drugs Safety Act, which places restrictions on abortion inducing drugs, including RU-486 (Mifepristone) among others.

An MCC letter to the committee stated: “Modern technological advances unfortunately have made abortion available through the use of chemical drugs, making the process of having an abortion less invasive and expensive. The Internet and video conferencing also make abortion more accessible in some states, presumably for the sake of convenience. Needless to say, such practices should be vigorously resisted.”

The legislation would make it a Class C Felony for any person other than a physician to give the medications. And it would be a Class B Felony to give the drug to an unknowing person.

House Bill 298 requires an obstetric ultrasound be conducted and reviewed with the pregnant woman prior to the 24-hour waiting period for an abortion. Bill sponsor Representative Keith English (D-Florissant) said seven other states have passed similar legislation.

State Representative English shared that had his bill been passed 20 years ago, he believes he would have two sons instead of one. “I have a personal story – a tragedy and that is part of my motivation in this legislation,” he said. “I think if she [his then wife] had seen an ultrasound I would have two sons now.”

House Bill 298 would require a woman considering an abortion to be provided an ultrasound and a chance to hear the heartbeat of the developing fetus, if audible.

In his testimony in support of HB 298, McClay pointed out a past court case on a similar bill in Texas.

He said, “The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals sustained a similar legal requirement in Texas in 2012, stating that a requirement that an ultrasound and heart auscultation be performed and made available for a woman to see and hear are constitutionally “sustainable” and “within the State’s power to regulate the practice of medicine, and therefore do not violate the First Amendment.”

The bills have not yet made it out of committee.