



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: P: 573.635.7239 F: 573.635.7431
600 Clark Avenue, P.O. Box 1022, Jefferson City, MO, 65102-1022
mocatholic@mocatholic.org www.MOcatholic.org

House Committee Considers House Bill 457 and House Bill 386 at Hearing

March 7, 2013 JEFFERSON CITY, MO – During a hearing of the House Health Care Policy Committee on Wednesday, March 6, the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) testified in support of two pieces of legislation pertaining to conscience rights and abortion.

House Bill 457 addresses the conscience rights of health care workers, and is sponsored by House Speaker Tim Jones (R-Eureka), who said the bill has “great support in both the House and Senate and on both side of the aisle.”

The bill, Jones said, “...is truly for the worker – for the employee. It provides a shield – not a sword – to help them protect their conscience.”

The law would allow a health care professional to opt out of taking part in certain procedures they deem to be contrary to their religious or moral convictions. Jones did note that prior notice of the objection has to be given to an employer, and the law could not be used by an employee as a sword, but only as a shield.

“This is not a law that would allow an employee to suddenly wake up one day and say, ‘I cannot do this,’ they would have to give their employer notice,” he said.

When testifying, Tyler McClay, general council for the MCC, noted that this legislation was increasingly necessary to protect the conscience rights of health care workers, as technology grows and changes the scope of health care and what can be done through technology. “As we make strides into new areas of research health care workers face increasing moral quandaries,” he said. “And it is important we have adequate protection for these health care workers.”

The second bill, House Bill 386, sponsored by Representative John McCaherty (R-High Ridge) would make it illegal for a physician to perform an abortion solely because of the unborn child’s gender, or a diagnosis of Down Syndrome or other genetic abnormality.

“Human beings are human beings, and whether or not they are a certain gender, or do or do not have Down Syndrome or another genetic abnormality, they are humans,” McCaherty said. “There are people with Down Syndrome and other disabilities living in society today. This bill addresses the fact of whether or not we see someone as being perfect or not. A life is a life is a life.”

The bill would not penalize a woman, but rather a physician who performs an abortion knowing it was because of the child's gender or a diagnosis of Down Syndrome or other genetic abnormality.

"All penalties are against the doctor and not the woman. Until Roe v. Wade is overturned, or whatever, women have a right to choose. This legislation will prevent the physician from selling abortions," McCaherty said, noting the new law would require the physician to discuss all options with the woman and not just abortion.

McCaherty testified that as many as 92 percent of children who are diagnosed prenatally with Down Syndrome are aborted.

Following the hearing House Bill 457 passed out of committee by a vote of 5-3. No further action was taken on House Bill 386.