

## DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

January 18, 2022

Via email only

Hon. Mark Pearson, Chair  
and Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Concord, NH 03301

**Re: HB 1609 (Changes to Fetal Life Protection Act)**

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

As the Director of the Office of Public Policy of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, and on behalf of Bishop Peter Libasci, I write to respectfully register **our opposition to HB 1609**.

As you know, the new Fetal Life Protection Act restricts abortions after 24 weeks. Prior to the enactment of the FLPA, New Hampshire law essentially permitted abortions to take place at any point up to birth, and thus failed to protect unborn children who have reached the stage of viability. It is worth remembering that this was beyond what even *Roe v. Wade* had provided for, given the Court's recognition in *Roe* that the state has an "important and legitimate interest in potential life" and that "[i]f the State is interested in protecting fetal life after viability, it may go so far as to proscribe abortion during that period, except when it is necessary to preserve the life or health of the mother."

HB 1609 would materially hamstring the operation of this important new law. Moreover, it would set the dangerous precedent of designating, by statute, specific categories of unborn children who may be aborted.

I ask you to think about this in the context of the way we want society to treat those who are in any way voiceless. As Pope Francis put it for instance in *Laudato Si*, his 2015 encyclical letter on the environment (or, as he subtitled it, "Care for our Common Home"):

*Since everything is interrelated, concern for the protection of nature is also incompatible with the justification of abortion . . . 'If personal and social sensitivity towards the acceptance of the new life is lost, then other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society also wither away.'* (*Laudato Si*, 120).

This only stands to reason. If we want our society to respect and value the child who is a refugee, or the child who is homeless, or the child who does not have access to health care, then

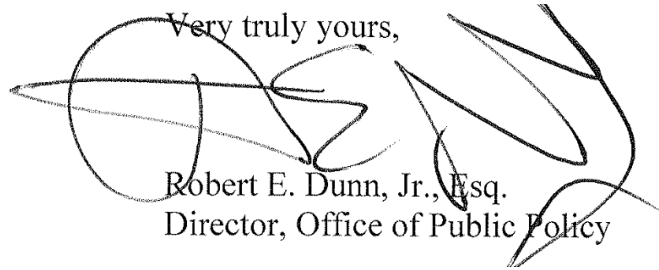
Hon. Mark Pearson, Chair  
and Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee  
January 18, 2022  
Page 2

we need to respect and value the child in the womb as well. If society decides that certain ones of us can be considered expendable, we should not be surprised if society treats certain ones of us as expendable.

Therefore, I respectfully ask that you vote ITL on HB 1609.

Thank you for your kind consideration of our views.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. E. Dunn, Jr.', is written over the typed name and title. The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract, with a large loop on the left side and a sharp, upward-pointing stroke on the right side.

Robert E. Dunn, Jr., Esq.  
Director, Office of Public Policy