



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER
Secretariat for Administration and Community Affairs

January 19, 2010

Judiciary Committee
New Hampshire House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building, Room 208
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

RE: HB 1662 (relative to informed consent for abortions)

Dear Representative Cote and Members of the Committee:

As a citizen of the State and the Director of Respect Life for the Diocese of Manchester, I write to your Committee to express my support and the support of Bishop John B. McCormack for House Bill 1662.

I would like to preface my comments by stating that we do not express our support for HB 1662 as a matter of religious doctrine valid only for those who assent to Catholic teaching. Rather, the issue raised by HB 1662 involves demonstrable scientific evidence, universal values concerning human life, and respect for informed consent. It is precisely for these reasons that we wish to make our opinion and recommendations known.

Every human being is endowed with the capacities of intellect and free will. These powers are uniquely constitutive of the human being and are the basis of human dignity. So fundamental are the powers of intellect and free will, that they form the foundation of every human right and the whole moral life. All of our obligations regarding informed consent are ultimately rooted in the fact that humans are made to know and choose in freedom. This truth about human nature is no less true about the woman who regrettably contemplates abortion.

Out of respect for her human dignity and that of the child she carries, the state has at a minimum the obligation to ensure that her decision is fully informed and voluntary. As with any medical procedure, HB 1662 provides for reasonable information about the risks, side-effects, or consequences of abortion and the reasonable and legitimate alternatives to this procedure. Consistent with the purpose of informed consent, HB 1662 also ensures that information is given about medical risks associated with carrying a child to term. HB 1662 is not unduly burdensome but is entirely consistent with the principle of informed consent in medicine.

HB 1662 is needed and justified not only because of the fundamental principle of informed consent but all the more because of what the consent concerns. This is not consent about minor or major surgeries which have acceptable risks. Rather, this is consent to a procedure that has a one hundred percent fatal risk to another human being. Is it too much to ask that a woman be informed not even about that risk but the possible risks to herself and the alternatives to this procedure?

There should be no mistake. The fetus that a woman carries is a human individual as is any one of us in this room today and possesses the same inviolability. The human fetus is an actual, not potential, self-integrating and self-directing individual human being with a human nature. A pregnant woman contemplating an abortion is not giving consent to terminating a mass of tissue, but a fellow human being.

Surely, the very least that should be done is to ensure that a pregnant woman contemplating such a grave decision be given the opportunity for proper informed consent.

For the foregoing reasons, and the reasons expressed in my letter in support of HB 1454, HB 1662 also recognizes the fundamental role of parents in caring for their children in requiring parental consent. A pregnant minor will benefit from parental involvement as she faces a life-altering decision that involves not only her unborn child, but also her own physical and emotional well-being.

For these reasons we urge the Committee to vote that HB 1662 ought to pass. We thank you for your consideration and for your dedication to public service.

Sincerely,

/s/ Peter J. Cataldo, Ph.D.