



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER
Secretariat for Administration and Community Affairs

February 17, 2011

Honorable Robert Rowe, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
Room 208 - Legislative Office Building
Concord, NH 03301

Re: HB 329 (Requiring Parental Notification Before Abortions May Be Performed On Unemancipated Minors)

Dear Representative Rowe and Members of the Committee:

As Chancellor of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, and on behalf of Bishop John B. McCormack, I am writing to urge your support for HB 329. This bill recognizes the importance of the parent/child relationship and the constitutionally protected role which parents have in caring for their children.

The Catholic Church maintains that both the dignity of every human person and the family institution are integral components of society. The Diocese of Manchester strongly supported the original enactment of the Parental Notification Prior to Abortion Act, and, when the constitutionality of that law was questioned before the United States Court of Appeals and the United States Supreme Court, the Diocese of Manchester and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops filed amicus curae briefs urging the courts to uphold the law. We have repeatedly and strongly advocated in favor of parental notification.

Our support for parental notification is rooted firmly in the natural law that, when any significant issue confronts a family member, the family should come together to resolve it. A pregnant minor indisputably will benefit from parental involvement as she faces a life-altering decision that involves not only her unborn child, but also her own physical health and emotional wellbeing. Parents have an equally fundamental interest in the welfare of their children, as well as a right and a responsibility to care for them. As the United States Supreme Court said in *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*, 505 U.S. 833, 895 (1992), "parental involvement laws are based on the quite reasonable assumption that minors will benefit from consultation with their parents and that children will often not realize that their parents have their best interests at heart."

Often due to their lack of experience and knowledge, teenagers cannot make informed choices about the medical care and treatment that take into account both the immediate and long-term consequences of a decision to have an abortion. The abortion providers, peers, and sexual partners do not always have the perspective or knowledge to provide sound advice. Indeed, given their own self-interested perspectives, those persons often will have anything but the best interests of the child at heart.

This is not just a matter of maturity; it is a matter of responsibility. Parents are the ones who are responsible for the care and welfare of their dependent children. Abortion is significant and irreversible surgery which involves innocent life, and it can have life-threatening physical complications for those who undergo abortions. A parent is in the best position to insure that the child's health and family history

are considered, that the child is receiving the best medical advice, and that the child obtains appropriate follow-up medical care.

Abortion also can have long-term mental health consequences. A doctor or other healthcare provider, no matter how compassionate, is not responsible for the child's mental health. The bottom line is this: parents are responsible for their minor children.

It would be a grave mistake to divest parents of meaningful input into the health care of their minor children. Opponents of this bill will falsely assume a conflict between the right and responsibility of parents to care for their children, on the one hand, and the best interests of their children, on the other. It is significant that, in every other context, the law assumes that parents are the natural guardians of their children's health and best interests. Indeed, New Hampshire requires parental consent - not just parental notification - with respect to a long list of healthcare and non-healthcare matters, including tanning, body piercing, employment, and possession and use of an asthma inhaler and epinephrine auto injectors. How does it make sense that children cannot be given an aspirin by a school nurse without the consent of the parent, but that same child can have an abortion without the parent even knowing that it has happened?

Both the New Hampshire Supreme Court and the United States Supreme Court have long recognized the fundamental right of parents to raise and care for their children. The State should not be allowed to interject itself into the unique and sacred relationship between a parent and a child. It is sheer folly to believe that third-parties are in a better position than parents to protect the interests of their children.

Therefore, we urge the Judiciary Committee to support HB 329. We applaud the sponsors of this legislation for bringing it forward, and we hope that the entire House will vote in favor of the bill.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your service to the people of the State of New Hampshire.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Diane Murphy Quinlan

Chancellor