



Catholic Conference of Illinois Press Conference Comments of MaryBeth Miller, BSN, RN, St. John's Hospital March 28, 2019

My name is MaryBeth Miller and I work as a nurse manager in the women and children's center at St. John's hospital here in Springfield. My entire nursing career has been devoted to neonatal intensive care.

I'm speaking today as a representative of Catholic health care across the state.

St. John's is part of the Hospital Sisters Health System, which operates 15 hospitals across Illinois and Wisconsin. I've always chosen to work in Catholic health care because of its mission-driven purpose to serve everyone and anyone in need. My job is a vocation and a calling.

As a neonatal critical care nurse, I've always been drawn to embryology, which studies the growth and development of embryos. During my more than 30 years in the NICU, I have watched as advancements in medicine and technology have dramatically increased the survival rate of prematurely-born infants.

When I first started my career in 1984, the chances of survival of a baby born at 28 weeks was 50/50. Now, that 50/50 chance extends to babies delivered at only 23 weeks. At St. John's NICU, 98 percent of our infants survive to leave the hospital.

In fact, the youngest baby born at our hospital who survived and went home with her mom and dad was delivered at 22 weeks and six days. She is now 5 years old and started kindergarten with the rest of her age group.

I am stunned at how the proposed legislation goes further than the Supreme Court ruling in *Roe v. Wade* when it flatly states that an embryo or fetus has no independent rights. The infants that I get to care for every day are tiny human beings. They look at you; they pull back their heels, grimace or cry when they react to pain; and they calm when you hold them and they hear their mother's voice. They have their own unique temperament and personality from the very beginning.

I urge lawmakers to reject House Bill 2495 and Senate Bill 1942.

Thank you.

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