

**Remarks by Cardinal Blase Cupich  
Press Conference in Springfield**

March 28, 2019

Last year, I came here to ask our elected officials to strengthen laws regulating the sale and possession of firearms. During the past year we have seen proof, in one tragedy after another, of the need for such laws and the consequences of prioritizing the unlimited right to own guns over the right to life of human beings.

Today, I come to question the unlimited right of one human being to end the life of another. The so-named Reproductive Health Act, embodied in House Bill 2495 and Senate Bill 1942 calls for a complete overhaul of the state's abortion laws, stripping the unborn child of any rights. This legislation states that "a fertilized egg, embryo, or fetus does not have any rights under the laws of this State."

Proponents of this legislation say it is necessary to safeguard access to abortion in the event *Roe v. Wade* is overturned. In fact, House Bill 40, signed by Gov. Rauner in 2017, removed so-called “trigger language” in Illinois law, that had provided for a return to the state’s former policy of allowing abortions only to preserve the mother’s life if *Roe v. Wade* were ever overturned.

What, then, is the problem this legislation solves?

Further, the legislation removes the right of health care workers to refuse to participate in a procedure that violates their right of conscience. Does the State of Illinois really want to become a place where people are forced to do things in their workplace that are against their most deeply held beliefs?

Another bill before our legislators removes the parental notification law for minors seeking abortion. The current parental notification requirement can be waived if a court finds a minor

sufficiently mature and well enough informed to decide to have the abortion. In fact this override has been granted in hundreds of cases.

Again, a solution in search of a problem.

Let's not speculate about things that might not or are unlikely to occur. Let's look at the very real consequences of this legislation.

The University of Iowa keeps a registry of the tiniest babies who survived premature birth – born of pregnancies that ended, in many cases, earlier than the abortions this law allows. Medical science and their parents' hopes kept them alive. Their survival is celebrated. How are these little ones different from the unborn without rights this legislation describes? This is a fundamental question that should be well considered before such important legislation is voted on.

Who lives? Who dies? Who decides?

The state and its leaders have not only a responsibility but also a vested interest in defending the sacredness and value of every human life. Wherever we turn today, we encounter mounting efforts to treat the lives of men, women and children as mere means to larger and allegedly more important goals. Those in need of health care are told it is a privilege they must be able to afford, and those in declining health are considered less worthy of continued care. Global markets are developing for human trafficking and for the sale of human organs by those driven, in the desperation of poverty, to risk death to provide food and shelter for their families.

In my city, innocent children and adults die almost daily on our streets from gun violence at the hands of those who consider human life to be cheap, abetted by those who place their right to profit from gun sales above our neighbors' right to life. And in

terrorism, we see the chilling assertion that it is legitimate to kill innocent men, women and children to achieve political ends and exact revenge.

It is in this context that we must view this proposed legislation as the latest attack on human dignity, motivated by the dominant cultural ethic that asserts the lives of unborn children have no value and sanctity when weighed against the wishes and needs of others.

Against such mounting challenges to human dignity, it is critically important that each of us, but especially our elected leaders, defend the inherent and inalienable value of every human life. I call on our legislators to reject these harmful bills.

Now, I invite representatives of Illinois Catholic hospitals, health care and Catholic Charities to voice their concerns about this legislation.