

Statement on Illinois SB 1564
by Presidents of the Illinois Guilds of the Catholic Medical Association
May 10, 2015

We the undersigned are physicians and presidents of the five Catholic Medical Association Guilds in Illinois: Dr. James McCriskin, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Medical Guild of Bloomington/Normal; Dr. Mary Keen, Catholic Physicians' Guild of Chicago; Dr. Gregory Tudor, Peoria Guild; Dr. Errol C. Baptist, Rockford Guild; and Dr. Richard Brown, Springfield Guild.

We write to express grave concern about Illinois SB 1564, which passed the state senate on April 22, 2015. SB 1564 violates the sacred life-affirming calling of medical practitioners by forcing them to provide information to aid killing.

SB 1564 would make it illegal to practice pro-life, Hippocratic, Catholic, and ethical medical care in Illinois. This is because the bill forces physicians and facilities to give patients, who ask for abortion, information about where they reasonably believe the unborn children may be killed.

SB 1564 is a clear violation of medical and Catholic ethics. The bill requires that if an abortion (or other unethical practice) is "requested by a patient," the facility or physician must do one of four things: (1) ensure that the patient will "be provided the requested [abortion] by others in the facility," or (2) "refer," (3) "transfer," or (4) "provide in writing information to the patient about," "other health care providers who they reasonably believe may offer the" abortion.

All four of these options constitute cooperation in the evil of abortion. Providing information about where abortions are performed necessarily aids and participates in the woman's express intention and goal of aborting her child.

Recently, the National Catholic Bioethics Center made the following statement:

"Any form of referral constitutes formal cooperation, and would therefore be immoral. A 'referral' in moral terms is when the person who refuses to do the immoral procedure directs the requesting person to another individual or institution because the other individual or institution is known or believed to be willing to provide the immoral procedure in question. Even if the person objecting does not explicitly command the requesting person to act, the provision of information because it is known or believed to enable the other to receive the immoral procedure amounts to a referral in moral terms. The objector implicitly wills the requestor's accomplishment of the evil act. This would include an action such as providing a list of nearby providers who are known or believed to offer the immoral procedure."

"The moral assessment of the referral does not change even if the action is required by one's employer or by a state law. For example, a hospital regulation requiring a health care provider who objects to prescribing contraception to provide a patient with a list of other gynecologists in the network who will prescribe contraception would not exculpate the physician from formal cooperation with evil. A state law mandating that Catholic hospitals provide patients who request

abortion with a list of other facilities or providers that it knows or believes will perform abortions would not exculpate the hospital from formal cooperation with evil.”

National Catholic Bioethics Center, May 4, 2015, *available at*
<http://www.ncbcenter.org/page.aspx?pid=1263> .

We believe this statement by NCBC can be directly applied to the illicit cooperation in evil that SB 1564 requires of pro-life medical practitioners in Illinois. When the bill requires the provision “information to the patient about other health care providers who they reasonably believe may offer” an abortion, it is requiring what NCBC describes as “the provision of information . . . believed to enable the other to receive the immoral procedure.” This, the NCBC explains, constitutes illicit cooperation in evil.

SB 1564’s text, findings and legislative history explicitly declare that this information is mandated to increase and effect patients’ access to services to which some providers object. Advocates of the bill have specifically pro-abortion motives. The law appears to provide a way for secret shoppers to close down pro-life pregnancy centers and prolife physicians’ offices out of purely malignant intent.

Pro-life pregnancy centers and pro-life doctors should not be forced to violate their consciences by providing such information, especially since this information is readily available in the yellow pages and on the internet, and patients can readily access it without others’ help.

Margaret Mead, who was for legal abortion, warned that “it is the duty of society to protect the physician” from society’s own, constant “attempt[s] to make the physician into a killer.” This duty, she explains, exists because the physician’s freedom from killing is the only thing that provides unconditionally life-affirming medical choices to patients “regardless of rank, age or intellect—the life of a slave, the life of the Emperor, the life of a foreign man, the life of a defective child.” SB 1564 attacks patient choice by taking away Illinois women’s choice of physicians and facilities that will heal only, and that will not assist or provide information for those who kill.

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