



Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities

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Dear Senator:

As chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities, I am writing today to urge you to vote for the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, when it comes to the Senate floor.

The Catholic Church's teaching concerning abortion is well known. We hold that every child, from conception onward, deserves love and the protection of the law. We believe that no person or government has the right to take the life of an innocent human being – and we hold that the real problems that lead women to consider abortion should be addressed with solutions that support both mother and child.

While there are divergent views on the practice of abortion, it is widely recognized from public opinion polls that a strong majority of the public is consistently opposed to late term abortions. Public attention to stories about Planned Parenthood's callous and disturbing practices of harvesting fetal body parts from late-term abortions, partial-birth abortions, and the deplorable actions of late-term abortionist Dr. Kermit Gosnell, convicted of murder and other crimes committed while performing abortions, have shocked our nation and led many Americans to realize that our permissive laws and attitudes have allowed the abortion industry to undertake these procedures. All decent and humane people are repulsed by the callous and barbarous treatment of women and children in clinics, like Gosnell's, that abort children after 20 weeks.

Although we want, and will continue to work for, protections in law for human life from the beginning of its existence, for several reasons we think the proposed ban on abortion at 20 weeks after fertilization is a place to begin uniting Americans who see themselves as “pro-life” and as “pro-choice”.

1. The Supreme Court's past insistence that unborn children must be “viable” to deserve even nominal protection is not meaningful or workable. “Viability” is a *prediction* about whether a given child would have survived indefinitely outside the womb *if* given medical support. And, as was predicted in past abortion rulings by the Supreme Court, medical technology is moving the point of viability earlier in the pregnancy putting *Roe* on a collision course with itself. Stories of children being born earlier in pregnancy, as early as 20 weeks post-fertilization, are becoming more common.
2. These procedures after the middle point of pregnancy also pose serious dangers to women – as evidenced by a disturbing number of news stories about the death or serious complications of women undergoing such procedures.
3. Some have tried to argue that such difficult and risky procedures should instead be done in more “mainstream” abortion clinics. This misses the point. Many women are sent to clinics like Gosnell's by “mainstream” clinics, because they wanted nothing to do with abortions performed at such a late stage in the child's development. What does it say about us as a nation, if we will not act against abortions that even full-time abortionists find abhorrent?

On behalf of our country and the children whose lives are at stake, I urge you to vote for the common-sense reform offered by the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act.

Sincerely,

Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York
Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities