



## Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities

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September 19, 2022

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chris Smith  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Graham and Congressman Smith,

I write to thank you for introducing the “Protecting Pain-Capable Unborn Children from Late-Term Abortions Act” protecting the right to life of unborn children beginning at 15 weeks after fertilization.

The Catholic Church remains clear and consistent in asserting that true justice demands the right to life, the most basic human and civil right, for *every* child, from conception onward. No person or government has the right to take the life of any innocent human being, regardless of its stage of development. Furthermore, the Catholic Church has been, and remains, committed to [standing with moms in need](#), and providing life-affirming solutions to the real problems that lead women to consider abortion--solutions that support both mother and child.

Since the Supreme Court’s decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Org.*, overturning *Roe v. Wade* and returning the issue of abortion to the people to decide through their elected representatives, the country has been in tremendous turmoil over the tragic and divisive issue of abortion. Although we will never cease working for laws that protect human life from its beginning and supporting mothers in need, we think that this proposed legislation is a place to begin uniting Americans regardless of their views on abortion. Further, we strongly agree that there is a federal role for protecting unborn human life.

Science continues to reveal the amazing development and characteristics of babies in utero, such as their ability to respond to music, to their mother’s voice, and to other stimuli. Furthermore, there is significant scientific evidence that babies can feel pain as early as 12 weeks’ gestation. In the recent collaborative report, “Reconsidering Fetal Pain,” scientists summarized their findings in part: “Overall, the evidence, and a balanced reading of that evidence, points towards an immediate and unreflective pain experience...from as early as 12 weeks... [W]e no longer view fetal pain...in a gestational window of 12–24 weeks as impossible based on the neuroscience.”<sup>1</sup>

Finally, not only does abortion end the life of the unborn child, but it is frequently harmful to the mother, emotionally and physically. Late-term abortions, such as those performed when the unborn child is 15 weeks or older, pose significant physical, and potential fatal, risks to the mother.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Reconsidering Fetal Pain,” *J Med Ethics* 2020;46:3–6, <https://jme.bmj.com/content/medethics/46/1/3.full.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Angela Lanfranchi, Ian Gentles, & Elizabeth Ring-Cassidy, *Complications: Abortion’s Impact on Women* 96 (2013); see also John J. Thorpe, Jr., M.D., et al., *Long Term Physical and Psychological Consequences of Induced Abortion: Review of the Evidence*, 58 *Obstetrical & Gynecological Survey* 67, 70-72, 75 (2002); see also Brent Rooney & Byron C. Calhoun, M.D., *Induced Abortion and Risk of Later Premature Births*, 8 *J. Am. Physicians & Surgeons* 46 (2003).

I support your efforts with the “*Protecting Pain-Capable Unborn Children from Late-Term Abortions Act*” to protect the right to life of unborn babies from 15 weeks’ gestation. All elected officials, including federally elected members of Congress, now have the opportunity to protect unborn human life and should rise to the occasion. We strongly encourage your colleagues in Congress to co-sponsor this legislation.

It is long past time to end the barbaric practice of abortion, and to provide life-affirming alternatives that support and protect both mother and child.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ William E. Lori". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Archbishop William E. Lori  
Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities