



Committee on Pro-Life Activities

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Hon. Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 16, 2024

Dear Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As Congress begins the appropriations process for Fiscal Year 2025, several committees within the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) are engaging on appropriations matters under their purview. In this annual process, we work to advance the common good through funding that supports the poor, migrants and refugees, foreign assistance, environmental protection, healthcare, housing, nutrition, and other programs that help people meet basic needs. These priorities, which are necessary for human flourishing and serve the dignity of the human person, cannot be separated from the protection of preborn lives. I thus write on behalf of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

In the post-*Dobbs* landscape, it is as important as ever that government priorities respond in authentic, life-affirming ways to the needs of mothers and their families. We continue to call for policies that put children and families first. These include improvements and investments in maternal and child health and child care, strengthening the Child Tax Credit, a paid parental leave policy, fully funding the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and more.¹ In addition to offering assistance, pro-family policies ought to serve marriage and the integrity of the family itself, as institutions that in turn can, on average, strengthen members' socioeconomic situations. In all of these ways, society must make it easier to welcome and raise a new child, and promote life and hope for both preborn children and their mothers.

The USCCB remains opposed to any efforts to expand taxpayer funding of abortion, especially if the Hyde Amendment or any other longstanding, life-saving appropriations policies were to be stripped from the annual appropriations bills. It is vital that the Hyde Amendment and all the related life-saving appropriations policies remain in place. This, moreover, must not be treated as a bargaining chip for other provisions, but as a basic premise. *The USCCB will oppose any bill that expands taxpayer funding of abortion, including any appropriations bill.*

We strongly encourage Congress in the appropriations process to also counter the Administration's aggressive and overreaching moves of the past two years that facilitate and promote access to elective abortion. This especially involves the Departments of Health and Human Services (including the Food and Drug Administration), State, Defense, and Veterans Affairs, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Actions such as turning veterans' hospitals and neighborhood convenience stores into abortion providers are unconscionable and degrade the dignity of patients and communities.

We take this stand because abortion funded by the government advances neither healthcare nor justice; it is the antithesis of healthcare and justice. First, contrary to common belief, actual direct abortion is never necessary to save the life of a mother.² In fact, far from promoting "women's health," abortion often has negative effects on women's wellbeing.³ Further, as Pope Francis has stated, we "appeal to all politicians, regardless of their faith convictions, to treat the defense of the lives of those who are about to be born and enter into society as the cornerstone of the common good." And further, "Their killing in huge numbers ... undermines ... justice, compromising the proper solution of any other human and social issue."⁴ It is not possible to authentically work against violence, poverty, racism and other societal injustices while promoting or funding the destruction of vulnerable human beings in the womb, which is also often a symptom of these other issues.

By offering "free" abortions or facilitating abortions, the government effectively asks pregnant women in difficult circumstances to end the life of their child, as the only "solution" to their socioeconomic difficulty in welcoming that child. But this is not a true support for women, and abortion is never a "solution." This is why policies like the Hyde Amendment, which has been estimated to have saved more than 2.5 million lives over 47 years, are crucial.⁵ They also continue to be supported by a majority of Americans, including many who disagree on abortion overall but find common ground on stewarding taxpayer dollars or preserving fundamental rights of conscience.⁶

Lastly, we will view with grave concern any provisions that would create new rights, funding, or facilitation for in vitro fertilization (IVF), and urge Congress to reject such measures. The profound desire to have children is natural and good, and pastors increasingly see the suffering that infertility causes. We therefore support restorative reproductive medicine, which is often effective yet overlooked, to identify and treat the root causes of infertility.⁷

IVF on the other hand, especially as practiced in the United States, represents a relatively unregulated industry that creates hundreds of thousands or even millions of preborn children who will be lost in attempts to implant them within a mother, interminably frozen, or discarded and killed (often in a selective, eugenic manner). There is perhaps no more literal example of what Pope Francis has often decried as a "throwaway culture." In addition to such mass death, IVF poses health risks to both women and the children who are born as a result of it.⁸

In turning the begetting of a child into a lucrative manufacturing process, IVF commodifies human beings – including the children it creates and, in many cases, donors or surrogates. This, furthermore, disregards the right of children to be conceived naturally by their own married mother and father.⁹ We affirm, though, that no one is "less than" because of their

being conceived through IVF. Every person has immeasurable dignity, which is inherent through every stage and circumstance of life.

In conclusion, we must increase efforts to meaningfully assist all women, especially the poor, those who live in the peripheries, those experiencing an unexpected or difficult pregnancy, and those experiencing infertility. This cannot be done in truth or love, however, if the supposed solution is to end the lives of their children. Please work together towards a common ground and better way that protects dignity, offers solutions, provides support, and ultimately empowers parents and children in all stages and circumstances of life to have the positive futures that they deserve.

Sincerely,



Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge
Bishop of Arlington
Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities

¹ See <https://www.usccb.org/resources/letter-congress-regarding-policies-support-women-and-families-october-26-2022>.

² <https://www.usccb.org/resources/Women's%20Health%20Infographic.pdf>.

³ See, e.g., Ilaria Lega, Alice Maraschini, Paola D'Aloja, et al., "Maternal suicide in Italy," *Archives of Women's Mental Health*, 23, 199-206, 2020 (double the rate of suicide, as reported in <https://lozierinstitute.org/new-study-elevated-suicide-rates-among-mothers-after-abortion/>); Donald P. Sullins, "Abortion, substance abuse and mental health in early adulthood: Thirteen-year longitudinal evidence from the United States," *SAGE Open Med.*, Sep. 23 2016 (45% increase in disorders); Priscilla K. Coleman, "Abortion and mental health: quantitative synthesis and analysis of research published 1995–2009," *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 199(3), 180-186, 2011 (55% increase in mental health difficulties relative to women who maintained unplanned pregnancies to term, especially with substance abuse and suicidality); Elizabeth Ring Cassidy and Ian Gentles, "Women's Health after Abortion: The Medical and Psychological Evidence," *The deVeber Institute for Bioethics and Social Research*, 2003 ed., pp. 217-35 (on relationship breakdown post-abortion, which can also reduce income and resources).

⁴ Devin Watkins, "Pope to Pro-Life Movement: 'Politicians should place defense of life first,'" *Vatican News*, Feb. 2, 2019.

⁵ Michael J. New, "Hyde @ 40: Analyzing the Impact of the Hyde Amendment with July 2020 and June 2023 Addenda," *Charlotte Lozier Institute*, Jun. 27, 2023, at https://lozierinstitute.org/hyde-40-analyzing-the-impact-of-the-hyde-amendment-with-july-2020-and-june-2023-addenda/?_rt=MXwxfGh5ZGUgQCA0MHwxNjg3ODg5MTEz&_rt_nonce=1446fabc6c.

⁶ See <https://www.kofc.org/en/resources/communications/polls/marist-poll-results2024.pdf>; see also <http://www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/upload/USCCB-Key-Takeaways-handout-final.pdf> (pre-*Dobbs*).

⁷ See Tyler Arnold, "'NaPro Technology' Offers a Pro-Life Alternative to IVF for Infertility Treatment," *National Catholic Register*, Mar. 26, 2024; "What If We Addressed The Root Of Infertility Rather Than Pushing The Questionable IVF Quick Fix?," *The Federalist*, Mar. 25, 2024; see also <https://naprotechnology.com/>; "'Isn't NaPro Technology Just Charting?' and other questions: A Natural Womanhood NaPro FAQ," *Natural Womanhood*, Jun. 11, 2020, at <https://naturalwomanhood.org/naprotechnology-answers-to-your-frequently-asked-napro-questions-2020/>; <https://www.usccb.org/resources/Reproductive%20Technology%20Guidelines%20for%20Catholic%20Couples%20updated.pdf>.

⁸ See <https://www.usccb.org/resources/vitro-fertilization-human-cost-2024>. With respect to regulation, see also Emi Nietfeld, "America's IVF Failure," *The Atlantic*, May 2, 2024; Lenny Bernstein and Yeganeh Torbati, "Inside the opaque world of IVF, where errors are rarely made public," *The Washington Post*, Apr. 28, 2024; Emma Waters,

“Alabama Embryo Ruling Brings Much-Needed Regulation to Fertility Industry,” *Newsweek*, Feb. 23, 2024. For more on the dignity of, and respect due, human embryos in the context of and in contrast to IVF, *see* Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Donum vitae*, Rome, Feb. 22, 1987; *see also* Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitas infinita*, Rome, Apr. 8, 2024, fn. 89.

⁹ *See* Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 2376, 2378. With regard to surrogacy, *see also* Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitas infinita*, Rome, Apr. 8, 2024, nos. 48-50; Pope Francis, Audience with the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See for the exchange of greetings for the New Year, Rome, Jan. 8, 2024. With regard to children’s rights, *see also* Pope Francis, colloquium on “The Complementarity of Man and Woman,” Rome, Nov. 17, 2014; Pope Francis, audience with International Catholic Child Bureau, Apr. 11, 2014.