



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland

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Comments of Suzanne Lafreniere, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese

Written testimony in opposition to LD 227
An Act to Protect Health Care in the State

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance & Financial Services Committee, my name is Suzanne Lafreniere and I represent the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland in opposition to LD 227. The Diocese has a population of over 279,000 Catholics* or one-fifth of the total population of the state of Maine. In addition to its 141 churches organized into 48 parishes, it has nine elementary schools, one private elementary school, one diocesan high school and one private high school. It also includes one Catholic college, Saint Joseph's College of Maine in Standish. Within the diocese, there are also seven subsidized housing units, four rehabilitation and residence facilities, and two child-care centers. There are three Catholic hospitals operating independently of the diocese as well as Catholic Charities Maine, the state's largest social service agency, which operates as a separate corporation.

It comes as no surprise to any legislator or any member of the public that the Diocese of Portland opposes LD 227. Respect for unborn human life is the foundation of the Church's constant teaching and practice.

The following is a statement from Bishop Robert Deeley, released yesterday.

A proposed bill to create new rights for "gender-affirming care" and "reproductive health care" in Maine law is a direct attack on the beauty and truth of human life as embodied in the natural reality of the human family. It is both unconstitutional and immoral.

Any change to the law to promote abortion on demand will harm unborn children who cannot speak for themselves but will suffer the ultimate price. Pope Francis reminds us that this is evil and on its most basic level is, in truth, "the termination of human life in the maternal womb, in the name of safeguarding other rights."

In addition, Catholics acknowledge and affirm that all human beings are created by God and thereby have an inherent dignity. God created each person male or female; therefore, sexual difference is not an accident or a flaw—it is a gift from God.

Children especially are harmed when they are told that they can "change" their sex or, further, be given hormones that will affect their development and possibly render them infertile as adults. Parents deserve better guidance on these important decisions, and we should urge our medical institutions to honor the basic medical principle of "first, do no harm." Gender ideology harms individuals and societies by sowing confusion and self-doubt. The state itself has a compelling interest, therefore, in maintaining policies that uphold the scientific fact of human biology and supporting the social institutions and norms that surround it.

Catholics desire the health and happiness of all men, women, and children. Therefore, we call for policies that uphold the truth of a person's sexual identity as male or female, and the privacy and safety of all. We hope for renewed appreciation of the beauty of sexual difference in our culture and for authentic support of those who experience conflict with their biological sexual identity.

Please vote LD 227 as Ought Not to Pass as written. Thank you for your time and consideration today.

*www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/maine/