

February 27, 2023

To: Montana House Judiciary Committee

From: Matthew Brower, Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference

Re: Testimony in support of HB 721

Madam Chair and members of the committee, my name is Matt Brower and I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference. I speak today on behalf of the Roman Catholic bishops of Montana.

I am here today to voice our support for House Bill 721.

The Roman Catholic Church consistently affirms the inherent dignity of the human person and the sacredness of every human life from the moment of conception through natural death. This foundational principle must serve as the bedrock of every just and moral society. It is this principle that also reminds us that the difficult and real-life problems that lead women to consider abortion ought to be addressed in a serious and substantive manner that supports both mothers and their unborn children.

This recognition of the inherent dignity enjoyed by all persons informs our understanding of the basic rights and protections to which all human beings ought to be entitled, including unborn children. Unborn children are the most vulnerable and voiceless members of the human family and they deserve full legal protection.

Dismemberment abortion is a particularly brutal procedure. It is cruel as has no place in a society that professes to value children and human dignity.

It is tragic and gravely wrong that courts have decided to allow states to protect only some unborn children and not all of them. However, if courts continue to maintain there is a legal right to abortion, then the partial limitations HB 721 places on abortion procedures represents a step in the right direction. While we have concerns that Section 2(1)(b)(ii) could be interpreted so as to allow morally impermissible abortions, on balance we believe the intent and impact of this proposed legislation is directed at the protection of human life and dignity and the proper safeguarding of women's health. We would urge further consideration of Section 2(1)(b)(ii) to ensure the language does not unintentionally narrow the definition of abortion so as to permit morally impermissible and otherwise legally prohibited abortions.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, on behalf of the Montana Catholic Conference, I urge a "do pass" and thank you for your time.