

January 29, 2025

To: Montana Senate Judiciary Committee

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

Re: Testimony in support of SB 136

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Matt Brower. I 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 to voice our support for Senate Bill 136.

The Montana Catholic Conference remains steadfast in opposition to physician-assisted suicide. Legalized assisted suicide represents misguided public policy and would have harmful implications for all of society. For example, we believe that permitting physician-assisted suicide sends the wrong message to the young people of our state where we already have one of the highest suicide rates in the country. It also runs the risk of damaging the fundamental trust that ought to exist within the doctor-patient relationship.

Ultimately, physician-assisted suicide is contrary to our commitment to the common good and the least among us. In fact, it effectively abandons a subset of our population. If we, as a society, say not only that it is okay for a population of our state to take their own lives but that, with the state's approval, those who assist them can do so with impunity, what incentive is there for the state and society to put resources into hospice, palliative care, pain management, and mental health services?

There has been much confusion about the state of the law regarding physician-assisted suicide in Montana following the Montana Supreme Court's 2009 decision in *Baxter v. Montana*. While there are those who argue that assisted suicide is legal in our state, we disagree and believe that our law ought to make clear that Montana prohibits physician-assisted suicide.

For many of the reasons that you have heard or will hear today we stand in support of efforts to address the growing crisis of suicide, including that which is doctor-prescribed.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, we urge a "do pass." Thank you for your time.