



Diocese of Helena

# MONTANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE



Diocese of Great  
Falls-Billings

April 23, 2019

The Honorable Steve Bullock  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620-0801

Dear Governor Bullock,

As leaders of the Roman Catholic Church in Montana we write urging you to sign into law Senate Bill 100, recently passed by Montana's House of Representatives and Senate.

This bill protects the interests of pregnant women who may be considering an abortion. By requiring that they simply be offered the opportunity to see their unborn child through an ultrasound and listen to the heartbeat, it helps to ensure meaningful informed consent and empowers them with information to which they have a right. The state has a profound interest in ensuring informed consent and protecting the physical and psychological health of women. Senate Bill 100 only furthers these interests.

Some opponents of the bill have argued that that bill is intended to shame or intimidate women who may be considering an abortion. Nothing could be further from the truth. Notable during the hearings on this bill were the number of women who came forward in support of Senate Bill 100 sharing their stories of abortions that they had years ago and the grief and anguish they felt having made a choice that they didn't fully understand or appreciate. They expressed how much they wished an ultrasound had been available to them at that time before making an irreversible decision they have regretted ever since.

The constitutional arguments against Senate Bill 100 are highly questionable. The free speech, equal protection and right to privacy claims against the bill's constitutionality fail to account for substantial and legally sound responses that, at the very least, would deserve review by a court. To summarily dismiss this legislation as "unconstitutional" would be to render a judgment not well-supported by federal and state legal precedent. Indeed, to cite but one recent case, earlier this month the Sixth Circuit ruled Kentucky's "Ultrasound Informed Consent Act" does not violate the First Amendment rights of doctors. The "compelled speech" elements of that law far exceed what is called for in the modest and reasonable requirements of Senate Bill 100.

Montanans across our state look to you, their governor, to stand up for the needs of all. We hope and pray you will do so by signing this bill and supporting pregnant women and their right to be empowered and entrusted with the personal medical information to which they have a right. Know, too, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue with you further.

Please know that you remain in our prayers as you continue the important work of serving the people of our great state.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael W. Warfel".

Most Reverend Michael W. Warfel  
Bishop of Great Falls-Billings

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin S. O'Neill".

Reverend Monsignor Kevin S. O'Neill  
Diocesan Administrator, Diocese of Helena