

February 12, 2019

To: Montana House Judiciary Committee

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

Re: Testimony in support of HB 375

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Matt Brower [B R O W E R] 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 375.

The Roman Catholic Church consistently affirms the dignity of the human person and the sacredness of every human life. Every person has an inherent dignity and value. This dignity is not something earned by our good behavior but rather something we all enjoy by virtue of the fact we are children of God. It is imperative that society recognize, promote and defend this dignity for all, with no exceptions.

Proper nutrition, health care and medical care are part and parcel of humane treatment and the human dignity of both mother and child require the provision of individual-specific appropriate prenatal, perinatal and postpartum care. Such care supports expectant mothers and their unborn children at a time of great vulnerability for both.

Perhaps equally important is the message that the provision of this type of care sends to expectant mothers who find themselves incarcerated. It says that not only do we care about their unborn children but that we care about them as persons capable of finding hope and purpose during a time of tremendous darkness. We know that women who may have previously made poor choices are often inspired to make positive life changes while experiencing pregnancy. Treating incarcerated pregnant women with respect, compassion and support says, "We believe you are important and capable of reaching your full potential. There is help and there is reason for hope!"

House Bill 375 takes steps to ensure that pregnant women who are incarcerated receive the type of care to which they and their unborn children are entitled.

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.