



Testimony
HB 2330 – Health plan coverage for the voluntary termination of a pregnancy
House Committee on Health Care & Wellness
January 19, 2012

My name is Sister Sharon Park; I am Executive Director of the Washington State Catholic Conference, which represents the Catholic Bishops of Washington State on issues of public policy. The Catholic Conference respectfully urges you to oppose passage of HB 2330, mandating abortion in health insurance.

This bill creates a new mandate for both chemical and surgical abortion, even late into pregnancy, in all health plans that cover maternity care throughout the state. This does not conform to federal law for two reasons:

The federal health care reform law has an explicit provision that NOTHING in the Act can be used to mandate abortion as an essential health benefit in any plan.

In addition there is a separate provision that a multistate plan promoted under the federal law may not include elective abortions -- sec. 4 of the bill was needed in order to avoid a direct conflict between state law and this federal provision. But the policy of the state law is still the opposite of the policy of the federal law, regarding the mandating of abortion coverage

Most notable of all, any effort to implement this law would violate yet another provision of federal law, the Hyde/Weldon amendment, which forbids any state government that receives federal funds to require any health care provider (including any provider of a health insurance plan) to provide, pay for, or provide coverage of abortion. Note that the Hyde/Weldon amendment is not a "conscience clause" exempting morally or religiously opposed health care plans from an overall abortion coverage mandate. It forbids establishing a mandate upon any plan in the first place.

The penalty is denial of all federal funding to that state under the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill. The amendment has been in federal law since 2004, and was just reaffirmed by both House and Senate and signed again into law by President Obama just before Christmas. So the legislature could pass this law and mandate abortion coverage in all health plans, but this would risk losing all federal funds for everything else relating to health care, labor and education.

I ask you to oppose HB 2330.