

Catholic Advocacy Day 2021 Policy Brief

Dignity of the Human Person and Religious Liberty

The dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society . . . In our society, human life is especially under attack from abortion . . . Other direct threats to the sanctity of life include euthanasia and assisted suicide . . . Catholic teaching about the dignity of life calls us to oppose torture, unjust war, . . . to oppose racism; to oppose human trafficking; and to overcome poverty and suffering."

- Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2020

Expansion of Assisted Suicide: [House Bill 1141](#) (HB 1141)

In 2008 state voters approved Initiative 1000 (I-1000), the Physician-Assisted Death Initiative (also known as the Death With Dignity Act), but only after being assured that certain "safeguards" in I-1000 would protect anyone from making the irrevocable decision to kill themselves during a moment of depression or anxiety. Among the safeguards promoted and promised to voters were a 15-day waiting period, supervision by doctors, and consultations with psychiatrists or psychologists. House Bill 1141 (HB 1141) treats these safeguards like obstructions to assisted suicide. The bill expands the use of assisted suicide by the following actions:

- The minimum amount of time that a patient is required to wait between making a request and receiving lethal drugs is shortened from **15 days** to just **72 hours**. Even that wait time may even be waived if the medical provider deems that a patient has less than 72 hours to live.
- Lethal prescriptions may be delivered via the mail.
- Non-physicians (nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and osteopathic assistants) may diagnose a terminal condition and write a lethal prescription. Non-physicians may also serve in a consulting, or second opinion, role.
- The definition of who may determine if a patient is suffering from a psychological disorder or depression causing impaired judgment is broadened. A psychiatrist or psychologist is no longer needed to determine the mental health of a patient seeking assisted suicide. Instead, a social worker, mental health counselor, or psychiatric advanced nurse practitioner may conduct the evaluation.

There has been no change to the state's assisted suicide law since it was approved by voters in 2008. No other state has enacted such sweeping changes. Additionally, the state Department of Health has reported that the risk of depression and suicide has increased due to mental health issues caused by COVID-19 - now is not the time to promote and encourage assisted suicide.

HB 1141 was passed by the House and is now in the Senate.

ACTION: Urge your senator to oppose the expansion of assisted suicide (HB 1141) and to maintain safeguards approved by voters.

HB 1141 is sponsored by Representatives [Rude](#) (16), [Macri](#) (43), [Stonier](#) (49), [Tharinger](#) (24), [Ormsby](#) (3), [Frame](#) (36), [Pollet](#) (46), [Goodman](#) (45), [Peterson](#) (21), [Thai](#) (41), [Ramel](#) (40), [Johnson, J.](#) (30), [Bateman](#) (22), [Simmons](#) (23), [Fitzgibbon](#) (34), [Valdez](#) (46).

Abortion Coverage Mandate for Student Health Plans: House Bill 1009 (HB 1009)

House Bill 1009 (HB 1009) mandates that all student health plans for colleges and universities cover abortion. Any student health plan that provides coverage for maternity care or services will also be required to cover abortion.

Some objections based on conscience are permitted, so Catholic colleges and universities will not be required to provide abortion coverage. However, HB 1009 is problematic for students of faith who wish to uphold the sanctity of life while attending secular colleges in the state. They will not have the opportunity to purchase health insurance without violating their consciences. Students will have to choose between going without insurance or being forced to purchase policies that subsidize and promote a procedure that violates their conscience. HB 1009 not only promotes the destruction of human life but also violates the fundamental right to conscience guaranteed by our state and national constitutions.

HB 1009 passed in the House and is now in the Senate.

ACTION: Urge your senator to oppose the abortion coverage mandate for student health plans.

HB 1009 is sponsored by Representatives [Thai](#) (41), [Slatter](#) (48), [Wicks](#) (38), [Ortiz-Self](#) (31), [Kloba](#) (1), [Lekanoff](#) (40), [Bateman](#) (22), [Johnson J.](#)(30), [Ryu](#) (32), [Senn](#) (41), [Gregerson](#) (33), [Valdez](#) (46), [Cody](#) (34), [Riccelli](#) (3), [Frame](#) (36), [Santos](#) (37), [Macri](#) (43), [Pollet](#) (46).