



Washington State Catholic Conference

January 9, 2018

**Statement by the Catholic Bishops of Washington State
on Mandating Coverage of Abortions (HB 2409)**

January 9, 2018 -- The Catholic Bishops of Washington strongly oppose HB 2409, a new bill that would mandate coverage of abortions in all health insurance plans offered in the state. The measure would promote abortions while violating the constitutionally-protected conscience rights of individuals, churches, businesses and others. It is a most fundamental principle of our faith - the inherent dignity of all human life from the moment of conception until natural death - that leads us to reject policies that promote abortion. This same principle also drives our care for the most vulnerable in our communities as well as our opposition to the death penalty.

The Catholic Church stands together with those who would protect women's access to basic health care. We have a longstanding commitment to care for women confronting the challenge of an unplanned pregnancy. Through our parish ministries and extensive Catholic Charities services, we serve women, especially those living in poverty, with material assistance, emotional support and counseling. This commitment can be seen in our PREPARES program, a state-wide initiative that walks with mothers, fathers, and their children from conception to age five.

We bishops stand ready—as the Catholic Church in the United States has for nearly 100 years—to work with others in assuring access to basic health care for every person. However, HB 2409 promotes the destruction of human life and violates the fundamental right to conscience guaranteed by our state and national constitutions. It would forcibly compel many of this state's citizens to act against their consciences. We urge the Legislature to find a better way to address women's access to health care.

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