

CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE

Remarks by Glenn Northern, Domestic Program Senior Associate

Press Conference on Republican Disapproval Resolution to Overturn D.C. Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Act
20 April 2015

I'm Glenn Northern from Catholics for Choice. We are honored to stand with leaders like Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton and with our colleagues to speak for those who often go unheard. There are 70 million Catholics who make up the Catholic church in the United States. We are the church, not just the nearly 300 bishops who often claim to speak for all Catholics.

Like me, the vast majority of Catholics support reproductive healthcare access for everyone, as well as real religious liberty. Certainly, Catholics believe that no one should be fired or penalized for her reproductive health decisions.

The DC Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Act would provide that security for those employed in the District. It would ensure that employees can make their own health decisions, including whether, when and how to start a family and what the size of their family should be, without fear of losing their jobs or facing retribution from their employers.

We need the Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Act because of the many stories from women across the country who have been threatened, bullied or fired from their jobs for their reproductive health choices, including being pregnant and unmarried, using IVF to conceive or using birth control. This bill would ensure that every employee in the District is free from such discrimination by strengthening existing protections.

How well you do your job should determine your level of success at work, not the private decisions you make about your life and whether your boss agrees with them.

Catholics for Choice works across the US and around the world to represent and amplify the voices of everyday Catholics as they follow their consciences to make decisions about their personal lives, including reproductive health decisions. The majority of Catholics, including the more than 600,000 Catholics here in the greater DC area, believe it is unjust to allow any employer, university administrator or hospital CEO to trample on the conscience rights of workers, students or patients.

The Catholic bishops are trying to bully the elected representatives of the District of Columbia by urging Congress to block these laws and disregard the will of the DC council and DC residents.

But Catholics for Choice is here today to stand in solidarity with the majority of Catholics in the District who believe no woman should be fired or punished for her private reproductive healthcare decisions. The bishops do not speak for us. We know that Catholic tradition teaches respect—even reverence—for every individual person's moral choices, guided by conscience, to do what he or she believes is

right. We know it is wrong and insulting to mistake something so blatantly discriminatory, so clearly restrictive of some people's consciences, for "freedom." Real religious freedom is an expansive rather than restrictive idea: it is not about telling people what they can and cannot believe or practice, but about giving individuals the space to follow their own consciences in what they believe or practice.

It is up to each of us to ensure that the religious liberty guaranteed to each American is not compromised for the political gain of an influential minority—even, perhaps especially, when that minority claims a religious mantle to justify their actions.

This bill is straightforward: the Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Act ensures that those who work and study in the District are treated fairly and protected from discrimination. Period.

Equality, fairness, treating others with compassion, the right to social justice for all—these are Catholic values. At Catholics for Choice, we believe these are values we all share. So we urge members of Congress to stop trying to block the Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Act and instead respect the consciences of every single individual in the District of Columbia, no matter their faith.

DC's families deserve no less.

For media inquiries, please contact Claire S. Gould at 202-986-6093 or cgould@catholicsforchoice.org.

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Catholics for Choice shapes and advances sexual and reproductive ethics that are based on justice, reflect a commitment to women's well-being and respect and affirm the capacity of women and men to make moral decisions about their lives.