

March 29, 2017

Labor and Employment Committee
California Assembly
1315 10th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 569, Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Act

Dear Chairman Thurmond, Vice Chair Flora and Members of the Committee,

Catholics for Choice serves as a voice for the majority of the faithful in the Catholic church who believe that the Catholic tradition supports a woman's moral and legal right to follow her conscience on important moral matters, including reproductive health decisions. Throughout the world, we strive to be an expression of Catholicism as it is lived by ordinary people. While religious voices and traditions are a vital part of public discourse, religious views should not be given disproportionate weight in public policy discussions. We believe in a world where all voices—the voices of the religious and of the secular, of Catholics and non-Catholics alike—are heard in public policy discussions.

We urge you to support AB 569, the Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Act (RHNDNA) to ensure that employees in California can make their own private health decisions without fear of facing discrimination in their workplace. When the government seeks to protect the right for every individual to live their lives according to their own beliefs and consciences, as does the RHNDNA, it ensures that our pluralistic society respects true religious liberty and civil rights. Allowing blatant discrimination against any woman who exercises reproductive choice is an affront to the protections guaranteed in the First Amendment, which ensures both freedom of and freedom from religion.

Catholic tradition reveres the idea of real religious liberty, where all citizens are able to enjoy their civil rights, respected as human beings free from discrimination based on another's beliefs. Our public policies should seek to further the common good and to empower people to exercise their conscience-based healthcare decisions, not enable the privileged few to impose their beliefs on others. All individuals should be free to make reproductive health decisions according to their own conscience.

Religious freedom is a fundamental American value. It guarantees us the freedom to hold any belief we choose without government interference. It cannot, however, be used to trump others' civil rights, and it should not be used to justify striking down laws that ensure people are treated fairly. We should strive to expand civil rights protections, not curtail them.

PRESIDENT

Jon O'Brien

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Catholic teaching regards conscience as the primary moral arbiter. As Catholics, we are called by our faith to follow our consciences in all matters of moral decision-making and to respect the right of others to do the same. RHNDAs would ensure that each and every employee in California can make their own private health decisions, based on their own consciences and in consultation with their own physicians, without risking their ability to support their family. Using religion as a tool to single out and control the behavior of those whose beliefs are different is wrong and antithetical to our long-standing tradition of protecting human dignity.

Catholics in California support policies that respect the ability of women and men to make moral decisions about their lives. RHNDAs protect that right of conscience for all.

We urge you to support the protection of civil rights in California by supporting AB 569.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon O'Brien". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J" and "O".

Jon O'Brien