

CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE

IN GOOD CONSCIENCE

June 7, 2018

Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
District of Columbia City Council
1350 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Allen and esteemed members of the committee:

My name is Cynthia Romero and I appear before you in my capacity as Director of Communications at Catholics for Choice. I have also been a proud DC resident of Ward 3 for 11 years.

For more than forty years, Catholics for Choice has served as a voice for the majority of Catholics who support access to comprehensive reproductive care. We advance policies that allow citizens—including the nearly 650,000 DC residents—to make their own moral decisions about their health and their lives.

That is why I strongly support the Abortion Provider Non-Discrimination Amendment Act of 2017 (B22-0571). This bill would prohibit anyone from discriminating against healthcare professionals for providing or being willing to participate in abortions. It protects the right of healthcare providers to speak publicly about their support for abortion access. It also prevents local hospitals from denying staff privileges to a healthcare professional who is an abortion provider.

Catholic teaching reveres individual conscience as the final arbiter in moral decision-making. As Catholics, we are called by our faith to follow our consciences when we make moral decisions about our lives. We also deeply respect the right of others to do the same.

As the daughter of factory workers who worked 12 hour days, 7 days a week I know—and you know—being a parent is one of the most life-changing decisions someone can make. A decision not to be taken lightly or imposed. That is why many Catholics in the district and across the country support policies that respect the inherent freedom and dignity of all individuals to make their own ethical choices about how, whether and when to become a parent.

The Abortion Provider Non-Discrimination Amendment Act would ensure that DC health professionals can use their training to provide the best possible care to their patients, based on their own consciences, without fear of discrimination. To the sponsors of this bill, thank you for defending the rights of the 45,000 hardworking doctors, nurses and caregivers who are a lifeline for our citizens.

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We often hear from those who seek to use their religion to limit access to reproductive healthcare. While we respect our neighbors' personal beliefs about abortion, I ask you to affirm the rights of those providers who feel just as strongly – just as sincerely – that their religious and moral traditions call them to provide compassionate, comprehensive care to their patients. For people of many faiths, including many Catholics, abortion can be a moral choice. Many abortion providers make a brave and deeply ethical decision to advocate for the rights of their patients.

This Council made great strides in passing the Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Amendment Act of 2014. That Act allows all DC residents the freedom to make reproductive health decisions that are right for them. To fulfill the promise of the Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Act, we must also allow providers to give patients the full range of reproductive care options they can offer based on their beliefs and medical expertise. A patient's freedom of choice is dependent on her provider's ability to deliver the care she seeks. This bill fills the gap, ensuring provider and patient can speak freely about reproductive care options.

Catholics for Choice recognizes the essential role that healthcare providers play in informing and caring for their patients so that each and every one of us can make those very personal, ethical decisions.

I hope you stand up for providers so that they can care for their patients without fear of discrimination. Please vote to advance the Abortion Provider Non-Discrimination Amendment Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Romero', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cynthia Romero
Director of Communications