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13 November 2023

Memo Regarding Two 2024 Ballot Initiatives
Signature Collecting at Parishes Prohibited; Deemed Harmful to Pro-Life Cause

Dear Brother Priests and the Faithful of Colorado,

The Colorado Catholic Conference is the united voice of the Catholic bishops of Colorado and serves to uphold the dignity of human life and the common good in public policy. The Colorado bishops affirm that sanctity of life is the preeminent issue concerning the Church in Colorado, especially concerning lives of preborn children, and continue to advocate against abortion and for life-affirming policy, as well as support thousands of mothers, children, and families annually. Human life must be protected at all stages, from conception until natural death.

Coloradans will soon be presented with two opposing positions on sanctity of life for preborn children for the 2024 ballot. Both initiatives are collecting signatures to earn their spot on the ballot.

The Colorado bishops ask that the Catholic Faithful in Colorado to **not support either ballot initiative**. This includes no signature collecting at Catholic parishes or ministries affiliated with the three dioceses. While one of the initiatives **defends life**, necessary groundwork is not laid for success, and it will likely harm the efforts in Colorado to cultivate a culture of life.

Please **do not** collect signatures for:

1. **“Right to Abortion,”** sponsored by pro-abortion organizations, COBALT and COLOR, with support from Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains and New Era CO.
2. **“Protections for a Living Child,”** sponsored by Colorado Life Initiative.

In the last two years, Colorado has sorrowfully become one of the top pro-abortion states in the country. Since the 2020 loss of ballot proposition 115 to prohibit abortion after 22-weeks’ gestation, the General Assembly passed and Gov. Polis enacted four extreme pro-abortion laws.

The 2022 Reproductive Health Equity Act (RHEA) codified elective abortion for the full 40 weeks of pregnancy, established a “fundamental right” to abortion, removed “individual and derivative rights” from preborn children at all stages of development, and removed parental notification for minors receiving an abortion. The additional three abortion bills enacted in 2023 include censoring pregnancy resource centers, banning abortion pill reversal (the first state to do so), prohibiting lawsuits from pro-life states against Colorado or abortion providers, requiring large employers and insurance companies to provide coverage for abortion, and violating the First Amendment rights of individuals and businesses that do not support abortion.

The only provision keeping Colorado from being the number one destination for unrestricted abortion in the United States is the 1984 Colorado constitutional prohibition against the use of public funding for abortion. This is what the “Right to Abortion” initiative is about: codifying a “right to abortion” in the Constitution *and* removing the prohibition against taxpayer dollars subsidizing abortion. Since the U.S. Supreme Court *Dobbs* (2022) decision, the monthly average of surgical (non-chemical) abortions in Colorado increased by 20 percent, which is an increase of approximately 400 mothers per month – from 1,780 in June 2022 to 2,220 in June 2023.¹ This increase is also due to organizations such

¹ Society of Family Planning, “We Count” Report: October 2023. <chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcapjpcglclefindmkaj/https://societyfp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/WeCountReport_10.16.23.pdf>

as COBALT and Planned Parenthood encouraging mothers living in surrounding pro-life states to come to Colorado for late-term abortions, and often financially supporting them to travel to Colorado for abortion.²

While Church teaching supports pro-life measures, “Protections for a Living Child,” sponsored by Colorado Life Initiative, is not a prudent alternative in our state’s current political climate and will likely harm pro-life efforts in Colorado, possibly for years to come. If enacted, the initiative would make abortion a homicidal offense and force the closure of abortion facilities. In recent years, the voting public has shown it’s not willing to accept this policy at this time.

Jesus urged his disciples to be, “wise as serpents and innocent as doves,” (Mt. 10:16), and this applies to the legislative and electoral process. The double-digit ballot loss for Prop. 115, the failure of many pro-life legislative proposals, and previous defeats for Colorado Life Initiative’s ballot proposals, show that Colorado needs a large-scale education and political campaign to successfully pass a pro-life proposal.

In addition to the reality of the electorate not sufficiently backing pro-life measures, the media and pro-abortion lobby are using the Colorado Life Initiative “Protections for a Living Child” to drive more voters to support the “Right to Abortion” ballot initiative. The Colorado Life Initiative proposal allows pro-abortion media and advocates to scare voters into supporting their initiative by saying things like, “They are trying to ban abortion!” At the same time, they cast their extreme initiatives as reasonable and a defense of women. This is why Colorado Life Initiative’s proposal will not be a successful option to advocate for life-affirming policy and scale back the abortion stronghold in our state government.

There is another option: Pro-Life Colorado.³

In the last two years, the pro-life community has become broadly united for the first time in state history. In the face of the 2022 Reproductive Health Equity Act (RHEA) and subsequent 2023 abortion legislation, Pro-Life Colorado launched as a new non-profit coalition representing the united voice of over 40 pro-life organizations in the state of Colorado. The Catholic Conference and the diocesan Respect Life offices are members of Pro-Life Colorado, which is uniquely positioned to oppose the pro-abortion initiative. Alongside other members of Pro-Life Colorado, including medical associations, pregnancy centers, and other pro-life non-profits, we will fight the “Right to Abortion” 2024 ballot proposal to ensure Colorado does not become the # 1 state for abortion in the country, and we will also continue to advocate for a culture of life to spread across our beautiful state. This includes co-sponsorship of the inaugural Colorado March for Life near the anniversary of RHEA (April 12, 2024).

Please **do not** collect signatures for either 2024 ballot initiative: “Right to Abortion” or “Protect a Living Child.” If you have questions or concerns, please reach out directly to the Catholic Conference.

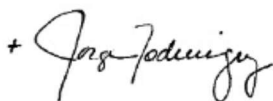
Sincerely yours in Christ,



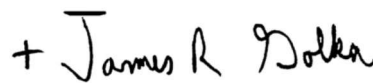
Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila
Archbishop of Denver



Most Reverend Stephen J. Berg
Bishop of Pueblo



Most Reverend Jorge H. Rodriguez
Auxiliary Bishop of Denver



Most Reverend James R. Golka
Bishop of Colorado Springs

² Cobalt Abortion Fund, <<https://cobaltaf.org/patient/>>

³ Pro-Life CO, <www.prolifeco.org>