

FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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MICHAEL B. SHEEDY
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April 7, 2014

The Honorable Tom Lee
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
418 Senate Office Building
404 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Re: Support SB 918 (Flores) to Protect Unborn Children Who Can Live Outside Womb

Dear Chairman Lee:

The U.S. Supreme Court, in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, and the Florida Supreme Court, in *re: T.W.*, have both held that the state may prohibit abortion once fetal viability has been achieved.

Florida Policy Is Inconsistent and Change is Needed

While the state of Florida currently has adopted such a policy with respect to abortion procedures in the third trimester, there are children capable of surviving outside the womb before 24 weeks gestation. There is often a margin of error as large as four weeks when estimating gestational age. Florida should establish viability – rather than the third trimester – as the point at which abortions are prohibited.

Legislation Addresses Need for Change in Florida Law

SB 918 (Flores) amends Florida law to prohibit abortions at the point of viability, the stage of fetal development when the life of a fetus is sustainable outside of the womb.

Builds on Existing Process, Physician Judgment and Concerns for Life of Mother

Florida law already requires physicians to estimate gestational age of a fetus based on an ultrasound. This bill would simply require physicians to record fetal characteristics to determine if, in reasonable medical judgment, the unborn child is viable. The bill additionally maintains an exception for abortions to be performed after viability if found to be medically necessary to preserve the life or avert substantial and irreversible physical impairment of the mother.

Support SB 918 (Flores) – Protects Unborn Life at an Earlier Stage

This bill does not prohibit abortion, but it does protect innocent, unborn children once they can survive outside their mother's womb. A viable child ought not to be the victim of abortion in Florida. Please support this legislation.

Sincerely,

Michael B. Sheedy
Executive Director

Ingrid M. Delgado
Associate for Social Concerns/Respect Life