

FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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MICHAEL B. SHEEDY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



March 31, 2014

The Hon. Aaron Bean
Chairman, Health Policy Committee
302 Senate Office Building
404 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Re: Support for SB 918 (Flores): Aligns with Key Court Cases; Protects Life

Dear Chairman Bean:

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

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.

Addresses Inconsistency in Florida Law

SB 918 (Flores) addresses this inconsistency by amending Florida statutes 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. Florida law already requires physicians to estimate gestational age of a fetus based on an ultrasound.

Accounts for Physician Concerns and Life of Mother

These bills would simply require physicians to record fetal characteristics to determine if, in good faith medical judgment, the unborn child is viable. The bills additionally maintain an exception for abortions to be performed after viability if found to be medically necessary to preserve the life of the mother.

Support SB 918 (Flores)

As a result of technological, medical, and research advancements, children have been found to be able to sustain life outside of the womb at earlier stages of gestational development. We urge your support of these bills to safeguard our state from terminating the lives of unborn children who are able to live outside of the womb.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael B. Sheedy". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Michael B. Sheedy
Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Anitere Flores