

# FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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Michael B. Sheedy  
Executive Director

March 15, 2016

The Honorable Rick Scott  
Governor of Florida  
The Capitol  
400 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

***Re: Please Sign HB 1411 - Regulation of abortion providers***

Dear Governor Scott:

We are grateful for the many bills you have signed into law that improve protection of women and the unborn in Florida. We ask that you approve a new measure, HB 1411, sponsored by Representative Burton and Senator Stargel. We offer the following points for your consideration. HB 1411:

**Requires abortion clinics to have a transfer agreement or its physicians have admitting privileges with a hospital within reasonable proximity**

All physicians who perform invasive surgical procedures in a non-hospital setting, except for abortion providers, are required to meet this standard by rule. AHCA defines "reasonable proximity" as a distance not to exceed 30 minutes by emergency vehicle.

The bill remedies this disparity. While we continue to value life from the moment of conception, we also recognize that women who do choose abortion should not be extended a lower level of care than when undergoing comparable medical procedures.

The debate surrounding this bill often invoked the Texas law under review by the U.S. Supreme Court, to which closure of clinics has been attributed. However, this bill is not comparable. Unlike HB 1411, the Texas law requires abortion facilities to meet minimum construction standards and does not allow for a transfer agreement alternative to physician admitting privileges. Florida's Women's Health and Safety Act (2005) already requires medical directors of abortion facilities to have admitting privileges or a transfer agreement. We do not foresee that extending these requirements to all physicians performing abortions will cause the closure of abortion facilities in Florida.

**Clarifies terminology**

As became apparent following the state investigation into Planned Parenthood last year, Florida has conflicting language regarding gestation and the handling of fetal tissue. HB 1411 clarifies these terms.

**Prohibits the public funding of abortion providers**

Many Floridians are concerned that some abortion providers receive public funds through contracts with the Department of Health. This bill would prohibit such funding of abortion providers, and redirect these monies to hundreds of federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) and private physicians that provide services to low-income women without promoting abortion. Despite concerns expressed by bill opponents, these services will remain available.

**Reporting of abortion data**

Currently, Florida is one of only a handful of states that does not report comprehensive abortion data to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The bill allows us to more fully understand what compels some women to terminate their pregnancies by improving reporting requirements of clinics that perform abortions. It is through proper recordkeeping and review of data that we can better recognize how to help women and men choose life in the future.

We strongly support HB 1411 and again urge your approval. Please let us know of any questions you may have. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael B. Sheedy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'S' at the end.

Michael B. Sheedy

cc: Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski, Archbishop of Miami, FCCB President  
Most Rev. Felipe J. Estévez, Diocese of St. Augustine, FCCB Respect Life Moderator  
Ingrid M. Delgado, Associate for Social Concerns/Respect Life