



## FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

*The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Florida*

201 West Park Avenue, Tallahassee, Florida 32301-7715 \* (850) 205-6820 \* [www.flaccb.org](http://www.flaccb.org)

### **Florida Personhood Amendment February 17, 2016**

The Catholic Bishops of Florida believe in the full legal recognition of the right to life of every unborn child and the defense of human life in all its stages, from conception to natural death. For many years, we have worked to promote a human life amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Additionally, Florida's Constitution makes it more difficult to protect against the scourge of abortion and needs to be amended.

While we applaud efforts of Personhood Florida to educate Floridians as to the importance of recognizing human life from conception, we believe that our laws and our state constitution must be changed prudently, giving full consideration to unintended consequences that may result from well-intended actions. While we sincerely respect the goal to amend the Florida Constitution so as to acknowledge full human rights for every human being, after careful consideration *we do not support the currently proposed amendment*. It is our opinion, and that of the legal experts with whom we have consulted, that passage of this amendment would not achieve the goal of overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

If such an amendment were to pass, a feat more difficult in our state due to the requirement to achieve support by 60% of voters, we are convinced that a federal district court would strike it down based on *Roe*. This decision would undoubtedly be affirmed by an appellate court, and the case would either not be granted further review by today's U.S. Supreme Court, or worse, lead to a reaffirmation of *Roe*. The unintended effect would very likely jeopardize current protections in state law and cause a loss of momentum in the ultimate goal of establishing full legal protection of the unborn from the moment of conception.

We remain of the view that it will be more prudent to pursue incremental measures that add to existing protections in law and help change hearts and minds. Thus, we continue our ongoing efforts to protect human life, ensure the safety of women and support state funding for Pregnancy Support Services. We will also seek remedies to address the problems unique to Florida's Constitution.

Finally, it is our earnest hope that all people in the state who respect the great gift of human life will respect each other's efforts, and not let differing views over strategy overshadow our common heartfelt support for building a culture of life.