

# Baltimore's crisis pregnancy centers will not be forced to post government-mandated signs

Baltimore's pro-life crisis pregnancy centers will not be forced to post signs with messages mandated by the city government.

That is the effect of the June 28 refusal by the Supreme Court to review a January ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit that **struck down a Baltimore ordinance** requiring pro-life pregnancy centers to post signs stating they do not provide or refer for abortions or contraceptives.

The petition for review had been filed by the City of Baltimore.

The high court's action comes on the heels of a June 26 Supreme Court ruling that found a similar California law to be in violation of the First Amendment rights of crisis pregnancy centers.

The Baltimore City Council passed the ordinance on a 12-3 vote in 2009. Then-Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien campaigned against the measure, with the Archdiocese of Baltimore filing a 2010 lawsuit on behalf of Archbishop O'Brien, St. Brigid Catholic Church and the Greater Baltimore Center for Pregnancy Concerns against the mayor and City Council of Baltimore.

"The litigation took years, but we are pleased to have achieved this favorable outcome under the First Amendment and have the strong precedent established by this case and the recent (California) ruling that religious nonprofits must be free to pursue their missions without being forced to deliver the government's preferred message," said David Kinkopf, an attorney with Gallagher, Evelius & Jones, who represents the Archdiocese of Baltimore and what is now known as the Center for Pregnancy Concerns.

Archbishop William E. Lori, who continued a battle against the law after he came to Baltimore in 2012, was pleased with the court's action.

"I am reminded of a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that 'the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice,'" Archbishop Lori said.

The Baltimore law, which would have imposed a \$150 daily fine on pregnancy centers that fail to post the mandated signs, was the first of its kind in the nation. It affected the the Center for Pregnancy Concerns, a pro-life, Baltimore-based outreach that provides free services to 1,200 women annually. Some of its services have been offered in facilities owned by the Archdiocese of Baltimore, including St. Brigid.