

Cloning is focus of Maryland March for Life

Enacting a ban on human cloning in Maryland will be a central focus of the 28th annual Maryland Candlelight March for Life, March 12 in Annapolis.

Prolife supporters from across the state will rally at the state capital, asking lawmakers to support the Human Cloning Prohibition Act of 2007 – a Senate bill that prohibits the manufacture of human embryos through the cloning process.

Sen. Roy Dyson, a Democrat representing Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's counties, is the bill's sponsor.

Nancy Fortier Paltell, associate director of the Respect for Life office of the Maryland Catholic Conference, noted that although legislation was enacted last year that claimed to ban human cloning, the statute expressly allows cloning for the purpose of destroying the cloned embryo for scientific research. The wording of the statute defines human cloning as allowing a cloned human embryo to live past the embryonic stage, Ms. Paltell said.

Existing law does not ban the creation of human embryos through cloning and it does not ban the implantation of those cloned human embryos into a woman's uterus, according to the Maryland Catholic Conference.

Linda Brenegan, respect life program director for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, said it is critical for Catholics to make their voices heard on an issue that relates to the "abuse and exploitation" of human life.

"Besides denying dignity and life to the human clone created, women also risk abuse as egg factories and are given potentially dangerous fertility drugs to stimulate production of eggs which are then used to manufacture the clones," she said.

The only existing legal limitation to the cloning practice is the requirement to kill the clones by the eighth week of development, she said.

"This repugnant reality must be corrected," Ms. Brenegan said.

There are currently six states that ban human cloning for any purpose, according to Maryland Right to Life. Supporters want to make the Free State the seventh.

The March for Life will begin with a Mass and prayer service at St. Mary's in Annapolis at 5:15 p.m. A pre-march rally will take place on the parish grounds before the march to Lawyer's Mall begins at 6:30 p.m. A rally on the mall at 7 p.m. will feature a keynote address by Sen. Andrew P. Harris, a medical doctor and Republican lawmaker representing Baltimore and Harford counties.

Participants will also meet with their lawmakers and attend a social in the auditorium of St. Mary's.

For more information, call 410-269-6397 or visit www.marylandmarchforlife.org.