

Maryland Catholic Conference opposes Maryland Constitutional Amendment on abortion

Jennifer Briemann, executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference, said lawmakers and voters should be greatly concerned about the Speaker of the House of Delegates' plan to introduce legislation establishing a woman's "right" to abortion via a Maryland Constitutional Amendment on the 2020 ballot.

Speaker Michael Busch, a Catholic, announced Aug. 1 that he plans to introduce the amendment when lawmakers return to Annapolis in January.

"The strongly divisive nature of national politics is spilling into our state because of proposals such as this," said Briemann, who represents the state's Catholic bishops in Annapolis. "Now is a time when our lawmakers, especially those in leadership positions, should be working to bridge the partisan divide for the betterment of all Maryland citizens. Instead, this unnecessary effort will further drive a dividing wedge through the electorate and divert already limited time and resources from addressing the many critical issues facing our state."

Speaking in an Aug. 2 written statement, Briemann noted that the "plight of working families to provide necessities for their children, the rampant violence on the streets of Baltimore, the opioid crisis that has found its way into every Maryland community, and the dire issues facing our immigrant families - all will suffer because of the misdirected efforts and politically-driven motives fueling this initiative."

Briemann noted that younger Americans are increasingly expressing pro-life opinions. She said it is "disappointing to think that our political leaders aren't seeking more bipartisan ways to channel this generation's positive energy toward efforts that would improve the lives of all."

"It is a sad, but well-known political reality that, thanks to the undue influence of the

nationally-backed and well-funded pro-abortion lobby, our lawmakers have no intention of overturning Maryland's already broad and permissive abortion laws," she said.

Briemann pointed out that in the last legislative session, the state legislature was not willing to provide statutory protection to an unborn child that dies as the result of a violent attack on a pregnant woman who has chosen to carry her baby to term.

"Given this context," she said, "it is clear that the proposed abortion initiative is an unconscionable waste of the political energy and enthusiasm needed to address the real issues affecting women in our state."

Briemann promised that as the state's "leading advocate for the underserved and vulnerable, regardless of life stage, socioeconomic class, or political affiliation," the Maryland Catholic Conference will work to defeat Busch's proposal and "we challenge all those who value the dignity and human rights of each Marylander to do the same."

Maryland has some of the most permissive abortion laws in the country, passed by the legislature in 1991 and confirmed by voters in a 1992 referendum.

Several other states are making attempts to enshrine abortion in their state constitutions in advance of any abortion-related rulings that might be made by the Supreme Court. Judge Brett Kavanaugh, a federal appeals court judge in Washington and a Catholic who once clerked for retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy, is facing confirmation hearings to take the seat of Kennedy, also a Catholic.

New York Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, called July 19 for a national prayer campaign effort that "the change in the U.S. Supreme Court will move our nation closer to the day when every human being is protected in law and welcomed in life."

He invited all people of goodwill to pray each Friday from Aug. 3 to Sept. 28 in a "Novena for the Legal Protection of Human Life." The USCCB said "Call to Prayer" materials will be accessible at <https://bit.ly/2JBU1MH>. Materials include prayers and educational resources and an invitation to fast on Fridays for this intention.

Catholic News Service contributed to this story.