

Pro-life official praises bill aimed to help pregnant women

WASHINGTON - A U.S. bishops' pro-life official gave high marks to a bill introduced in the U.S. Senate in December that would provide resources and support to pregnant women.

"The bill will empower pregnant women to make healthy choices for themselves and their children, born and unborn," said Deirdre McQuade, director of planning and information in the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities.

Kristen Day, executive director of Democrats for Life of America, the group that helped craft the legislation, said it is designed to reduce the number of abortions by aiding women who feel they have no other option.

The Pregnant Women's Support Act was introduced by Sen. Robert Casey, D-Pa. It mirrors nearly identical legislation introduced in the House earlier in 2007.

The measure "is truly a common-ground initiative to reduce the number of abortions in the United States," said McQuade in a Dec. 14 statement, noting that the bill includes "vital provisions supporting pregnant and parenting university students, a population particularly at risk for considering abortion."

The act would ensure that pregnant women are not denied coverage by insurance companies; establish a toll-free number for resources during pregnancy and after birth; and provide parenting education in maternity group homes.

It also would provide qualified new mothers with free home visits by registered nurses, and codify the current regulation allowing states to provide Children's Health Insurance Program coverage to unborn children and their mothers. The bill also encourages adoption by expanding adoption-credit and adoption-assistance programs.

McQuade said the legislation gives Congress "a long-overdue opportunity to help make abortion rare."

“We wholeheartedly support this constructive bill and urge the House and Senate to pass it for women, their families and the common good,” she added.

In her statement Day said, “We applaud Sen. Casey for leading the charge to reduce the abortion rate in this country by helping pregnant women.”

She said the bill aims to show “it is possible for people from different ideological positions to come together and help those who are in need,” because everybody should be “in favor of helping mothers and saving babies” no matter what their view is on legal abortion.