

## Illinois bishops' statement on bills to repeal state's Parental Notice of Abortion Act

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We, the diocesan bishops of Illinois, write today out of great concern. Bills have been introduced before the Illinois General Assembly to repeal Illinois' Parental Notice of Abortion Act. They are **House Bill 1797 and Senate Bill 2190**. The enactment of this legislation would lead to tragic and irreversible outcomes.

The Parental Notice of Abortion Act simply requires that when a minor girl seeks to have an abortion a parent or guardian is notified 48 hours before the procedure. The obvious hope of the law is that parents, by their deep love and moral obligation, will act to protect and guide their children. In every other facet of life, we are taught – and we teach – that parental involvement is key to the child's best interest.

It is unfortunately true that not all young people come from loving homes. In these cases, when the threat of abuse or neglect outweighs the rights of parents, the current law allows a young girl the opportunity to declare in writing that there is abuse or she can seek an emer-

gency hearing before a judge to explain her situation. We acknowledge that this can be emotionally difficult; however, such difficulty must be weighed against the harm done when our laws effectively separate children from the care of parents who love them the most.

The existing Parental Notice of Abortion Act provides important safeguards against the evils of sexual abuse and human trafficking. If a minor girl can be taken by any adult man to an abortion clinic, in the hopes of erasing the evidence of his abuse, what protection exists outside of the girl's parent or guardian being informed? Why would we want to create such a dangerous environment?

It is also true that the Parental Notice of Abortion Act works. According to statistics gathered by the Illinois Department of Public Health, since the law's final enactment by the Illinois Supreme Court in 2013, abortions performed on minors in Illinois have decreased over 30 percent. The lives saved by this law are real and present among us.

These are the reasons every state in the Midwest and 37 states overall have

laws requiring some form of parental involvement in the decision of a minor to have an abortion. Illinois has been among those states for 8 years and no obvious problems or detriments have been publicly exposed. The repeal of Parental Notice of Abortion is a tragic solution in search of a problem.

So what can you do? As Catholics of good will, we call on you to engage your elected officials – state representatives, state senators and the Governor – and urge them to oppose **House Bill 1797 and Senate Bill 2190**.

Possible methods of contact include phone calls, letters, emails, and Zoom meetings between legislators and you, their concerned constituents. For all of these efforts, you will need to be able to identify your legislators and secure the appropriate contact information. Here is how:

Visit the Catholic Conference of Illinois' website – [www.ilcatholic.org](http://www.ilcatholic.org) – scroll nearly to the bottom of the homepage, click on "Find Your Legislator" and input

the asked for information. Doing this will identify one's federal and state elected officials, and simply clicking on their names will provide the contact information.

In our concern for all human life, and particularly for the struggles of young girls in these difficult circumstances and their unborn children, we ask you to participate in this effort. Together we are strong, and we can make a difference. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
 Cardinal Blase J. Cupich  
*Archbishop of Chicago*  
 Bishop Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C.  
*Bishop of Peoria*  
 Bishop Thomas John Paprocki  
*Bishop of Springfield*  
 Bishop David J. Malloy  
*Bishop of Rockford*  
 Bishop Michael McGovern  
*Bishop of Belleville*  
 Bishop Ronald Hicks  
*Bishop of Joliet*

# Facts about Illinois House Bill 1797 and Senate Bill 2190

**House Bill 1797 (Moeller-D) and Senate Bill 2190 (Sims-D)** are identical pieces of legislation that seek to repeal the Parental Notice of Abortion Act. This law, which has been in statute since 1995 and enforced since 2013, requires a parent or legal guardian be notified when a minor under the age of 18 seeks an abortion. There is no requirement for parental consent, only notification. The law also includes two waivers: (1) a judicial waiver for those not wishing to inform their parents and (2) a blanket waiver for minors who attest to being physically or sexually abused.

## Repealing a reasonable and constitutional safeguard

- Every state bordering Illinois – Wis-

consin, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri and Iowa – require at least parental notification.

- The Illinois Supreme Court (unanimously) and the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals have both found the law to be constitutional.

## Repealing a law which has demonstrably saved lives

- Illinois Department of Public Health statistics show a decrease in abortions on minors since 2013, when 1,762 minors had an abortion.

- In 2014, that number dropped to 1,255; in 2015, 1,226; in 2016, 1,037; in 2017, 1,003; and in 2018, the most recent year for which data is available, 1,092.

## Cutting parents out

- A repeal would be contrary to the legal and moral right of parents and legal guardians to care for their children.

- o Under current law, it is illegal for minors to use an indoor tanning bed.

- o Under current law, it is illegal for a minor to get a tattoo or body piercing without parental consent.

- o Minors cannot vote, buy cigarettes, serve in the military or purchase lottery tickets, but they will be able to get an abortion at any time, for any reason, without their parents' knowledge.

- o Medical study after medical study have shown brain development in minors is not complete.

This is why so many of our laws require parental involvement in the deci-

sions of their minor children. Decisions on abortion, which have been shown to have significant physical and psychological consequences, should be no different.

- Since the law took effect, there have been no reported incidents of the abuse or neglect of any minor whose parents were informed of her intention to obtain an abortion.

The Parental Notice of Abortion Act is a broadly-supported, reasonable safeguard that allows parents to properly exercise love and care for their children.

Our government should be in the business of supporting families and assisting parents and legal guardians, not undermining them.



**The Messenger**  
Our Catholic Family's Connection

Newspaper of the Catholic  
Diocese of Belleville

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### Yearly Subscription Rates

Individual \$25  
Newspaper and e-Edition \$30  
For Home Delivery 618-233-8670

The Messenger is published bi-weekly by the Catholic Diocese of Belleville. 62221. Periodicals postage paid at Belleville, IL

### POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to  
The Messenger, 2620 Lebanon Ave.,  
Belleville, IL 62221

Phone 618-233-8670  
(ISSN 0279-3911)  
(USPS 340-740)

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