

‘Heartbeat’ law adds to Texas’ respect for mothers and families

AUSTIN – Texas’ new “heartbeat” law adds to a growing network of support for pregnant mothers and their families, the bishops of Texas said in a statement released September 3. The full statement follows.

This week in Texas a law protecting the unborn from abortion, once a heartbeat is detected, went into effect. For the first time since *Roe v. Wade*, the U.S. Supreme Court has allowed a prolife law to remain while litigation proceeds in lower courts.

We celebrate every life saved by this legislation. Opponents of the law argue the term “heartbeat” is misleading. They call it “embryonic cardiac activity” or worse, “electrically induced flickering of embryonic tissue.” These attempts to dehumanize the unborn are disturbing.

Abortion is a human rights issue; the most fundamental human right is the right to life. Abortion is not healthcare. Abortion is not freedom. Abortion does not help women. Abortion is never the answer. It is always the violent taking of innocent human life.

We cannot turn away and say that, since the killing of another person takes place within the body of a woman, we as a society should not care, any more than when someone is killed within the privacy of a home or in a public venue.

Texas has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in programs for pregnant moms and families through the abortion alternatives program. Hundreds of pregnancy and parenting support programs and adoption services in our state provide practical resources to women and families facing overwhelming circumstances. Women can contact the Texas Pregnancy Care Network at www.texaspregnancy.org or (877) 345-7734 to find help in their local Texas community.

Pregnant and parenting moms in need are in our parishes and our neighborhoods. As Pope Francis reminds us, our parishes must be “islands of mercy in the midst of a sea of indifference.” Everyone in the parish should know where to refer a pregnant woman in need. The U.S. Catholic bishops' nationwide program, *Walking with Moms in Need*, also helps parishes nurture and protect life. Anywhere in the country, Catholics can sign up to Walk with Moms in Need at www.walkingwithmoms.com. For women and men suffering due to an abortion, there is hope and healing through ministries such as Project Rachel and Raphael’s Refuge. God’s mercy is limitless and is for everyone.

We remain committed to assisting in and praying for the conversion of hearts and minds so all people will respect the dignity of the human person from conception to natural death.

The Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops is the association of the Roman Catholic bishops of Texas. The TCCB represents 16 dioceses and 20 active bishops. Through the TCCB, the bishops provide a moral and social public policy voice, accredit the state’s Catholic schools, and maintain archives that reflect the work and the history of the Catholic Church in Texas.