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15 October 2024

The Colorado Catholic Bishops Ask Catholic Faithful to Vote AGAINST Amendment 79 “Right to Abortion”

Attached are three separate letters from Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila of the Archdiocese of Denver, Bishop James R. Golka of the Diocese of Colorado Springs, and Bishop Stephen J. Berg of the Diocese of Pueblo, requesting the Colorado Faithful vote **against** Amendment 79 “Right to Abortion.” All four Bishops in Colorado are united in their warning that Amendment 79 removes commonsense safeguards to abortion access, including:

(1) Removal of parental notification:

Amendment 79 ballot language states that the “government shall not **deny, impede, or discriminate against** the exercise of that right [to abortion.]” According to legal scholars, this means that any law that “impedes” that perceived right is invalidated. This will be determined by the Courts, but the language is intentional, and Colorado courts have a history of proactively affirming abortion laws. Because parental notification laws contradict Amendment 79, it is likely those laws will be removed. Furthermore, Planned Parenthood’s former policy research organization, the Guttmacher Institute, has literature that lists “parental rights” as a *restriction* to abortion access.¹

Removing parental notification from the constitution means that a minor could be coerced into abortion by her boyfriend or school counselor, and her parents will not have a right to know. This also means, children who are sex trafficked could be brought to a Colorado abortion clinic, have an abortion without a requirement to let their guardian know, and be back with their trafficker forced to continue their slavery.

(2) Abortion on Healthy Mothers with Healthy Babies:

Amendment 79 goes far beyond *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and Colorado’s 2022 Reproductive Health Equity Act (RHEA), which permits abortion for all nine months. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) data show that there were 486 abortions at or after 21 weeks’ gestation in 2022 – this is 4 percent of all abortions in Colorado (3 percent higher than the national average). With today’s medical advancements, babies are able to survive outside the womb and could be safely delivered as an alternative to abortion as early as 21 weeks.²

Abortion clinics are currently unregulated in Colorado, posing a severe health risk to women undergoing the surgical procedure. Amendment 79 will ensure no regulations are ever placed on abortion clinics, even compared to heavily regulated hospitals, because that would be considered an “impeding” abortion access. This is important considering the number of surgical abortions that occur in Colorado each year – even on healthy mothers with healthy babies.

¹ Forouzan, Kimya. “Midyear 2024 State Policy Trends: Many US States Attack Reproductive Health Care, as Other States Fight Back,” in Guttmacher Institute, June 2024.

² Ahmad, Kaashif; Frey, Charlotte; Fierro, Mario; Kenton, Alexander; and Placencia, Alexander. “Two-Year Neurodevelopmental Outcome of an Infant Born at 21 Weeks,” in the American Academy of Pediatrics, 2017.

Boulder abortionist Warren Hern has stated that he conducts roughly 350 surgical abortions per year, and 50 percent are on healthy mothers with healthy babies.³ Denver abortionist Benedict Landgren has stated that abortion activists should not “stigmatize late abortion” on healthy mothers with healthy babies.⁴ This is not about fetal anomalies.

Since *Dobbs v. Jackson* (2022), data from the Institute for Family Planning estimate about 2,600 surgical abortions are conducted on women in Colorado every month – that’s over 30,000 per year.⁵ This number does not include miscarriage or extra-uterine pregnancy, which are **not** abortions because miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy do not result in the intentional killing of a preborn child. The number of babies lost to abortion in Colorado will increase with the enactment of Amendment 79.

(3) Direct Taxpayer Funding of Abortion:

Amendment 79 removes Section 50 of Article V of the Colorado constitution, which currently prohibits public funding for abortion. Last year, the Colorado legislature passed SB23-189,⁶ which mandates insurance coverage for abortion, including Medicaid for private providers. The only reason to **completely remove** Sec. 50 of Article V is to open the door for direct taxpayer funding for abortion. Proponents could have introduced a ballot initiative to create an exemption for public employees under Article V, but they are trying to remove it entirely. This is likely because the intent is for the Colorado legislature to reconvene in January 2025 and pass a multi-million-dollar bill to fund abortion procedures and travel with our taxpayer dollars.

The abortion advocates in the state legislature have said they want Colorado to become an abortion destination⁷ sponsor of Amendment 79 COBALT (a private abortion fund) announced it is capping spending on abortion procedures and travel but called for additional assistance.⁸ This is not without precedent. Oregon passed a \$15 million taxpayer-funded program for abortion procedures and travel in 2022.⁹ Colorado will likely do the same if 79 is enacted.

If Amendment 79 “Right to Abortion” is successful, then Colorado will become the most extreme abortion state in America. It is a moral obligation for Catholics to shape the moral character of our community, state, and country through voting. Our faith maintains a hierarchy of values when voting on candidates and issues, which is listed in our 2024 voter guide.¹⁰ The sanctity of life is the preeminent issue on the ballot.

The Colorado Bishops’ expectations and directions are clear: **Vote ‘No’ on AMENDMENT 79.** Please visit www.RightToKnowCO.com to learn more and support the campaign against 79.

Sincerely,



Brittany Vessely
Executive Director, Colorado Catholic Conference

³ Godfrey, Elaine. “The Abortion Absolutist” in The Atlantic, 12 May 2023.

⁴ Landgren, Benedict on X (twitter) reply to Dr. Jen Gunter on 28 June 2024.

⁵ Institute for Family Planning, “#WeCount Report: April 2022 – Dec. 2023,” 14 May 2024.

⁶ SB23-189 “Increasing Access To Reproductive Health Care”

⁷ Former State Sen. Brittany Petterson (@petterson4co) on X (twitter) on 23 March 2022.

⁸ Brown, Jennifer. “3 Charts that Explain How Colorado’s Largest Abortion Fund is Spending its Money,” in Colorado Sun, 19 August 2024.

⁹ Office of the Speaker. “Oregon Reproductive Health Equity Fund Will Counter Attacks on Abortion Access,” News Release, 15 March 2022.

¹⁰ Colorado Catholic Conference 2024 Voter Guide: <https://cocatholic.org/resources/voter-guide/>

Prot N. 2024-0539 AB-A

September 25, 2024

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I write to you today as your Shepherd with a deep concern regarding Amendment 79, which will be on the Colorado State Ballot this fall. As Catholics, we are called to build a culture of life. We believe in the inherent dignity of human life and that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and as a part of God's plan. We are to promote the dignity of human life from the moment of conception to natural death. The gift of the marital act and sharing in God's creation of human beings was a blessing God bestowed on man and woman before the Fall. Sadly, some Catholics today are lured by the voice of the serpent, as Adam and Eve were at the Fall, and support this constitutional amendment creating a so-called 'right' to abortion. Furthermore, we believe that parents are the first teachers of their children in faith and have responsibility for their children until they reach majority age, which this amendment perilously disregards.

Based on our faith in God and these fundamental teachings of Scripture and Tradition, I urge you to vote against Amendment 79, also known as the 'Right to Abortion.' This proposition does three things contrary to the dignity of the human person: it creates a constitutional right to unrestricted abortion for all 40 weeks of pregnancy, eliminates parental notification laws and allows for taxpayer funding for abortions, which is currently prohibited.

Colorado already has some of the strongest pro-abortion 'rights' in the entire world, and this proposition is even more extreme. If we do not defeat this, pro-life legislation will be unable to be passed due to the constitutional right to abortion, and countless children known only to God will die in Colorado because of state-subsidized abortion. To pass, it needs 55 percent of the vote, and recent polling data show that if more Coloradans knew all that this amendment would do, support for the amendment would drop as low as **47 percent** – making the support for the amendment fall below the threshold the pro-abortion lobby needs to win. We have a path to victory.

Coloradans need to know that Amendment 79 creates a constitutional right to abortion and bans any limits on late abortion. Even restrictions on abortions in the ninth month for healthy mothers and healthy babies would be illegal under 79. Data from the pro-abortion Institute for Family Planning shows an increase in late abortions in Colorado since the *Dobbs* decision (2022). It is likely that this amendment would lead to an even greater increase in third-trimester abortions, when the baby can feel pain and survive outside the womb.

It is important to know that not all medical procedures, even some that end in the death of an unborn child, are abortions. Abortion is the **intentional** killing of the preborn child. The pro-abortion lobby abuses heartbroken mothers and families to advance their cause, claiming that medical care after a miscarriage or when an unborn child dies in the womb is equivalent to an abortion. This is false. Abortion is never health care; health care does not seek the death of the child. I would encourage you to research the principle of double effect for a deeper understanding of this important nuance.

Another troubling aspect of this amendment is its ban on parental notification laws. The pro-abortion lobby places words such as “shall not impede” on a ‘right to abortion’ in their amendments intentionally – it means that all laws protecting parental rights are nullified. There is no age restriction on abortion in Colorado, and 79 would prevent parents from being informed if their 15-year-old daughter has an abortion. Parents must have the right to know if their adolescent daughter is being pressured into getting an abortion by their boyfriend or someone in authority such as their coach, teacher, school nurse or counselor.

Third, the amendment would allow for taxpayer funding for abortions without any restrictions or limits. This means that if the amendment passes, the state could mandate taxpayer funding for late abortions for *both* in-state and out-of-state women. Should this amendment pass, the Colorado legislature could allocate millions of dollars annually for abortion as soon as 2025, as though it were simply a mundane budgetary procedure.

Finally, although abortion is wrong on its face and not only because of the long-term consequences, we must ponder the ramifications of one abortion and the difference it makes in our lives and history. Just imagine if one of your grandparents were aborted, who would not be here today? When I considered the outcome, had my grandmother not been born, my mother and seven of my aunts and uncles would not be here, 25 first cousins wouldn’t be here, 26 second cousins would not be here, and so on down the line. Or imagine if Martin Luther King, Jr., had been aborted and how the course of history would have changed with no MLK for the Civil Rights Movement? Do we truly understand the gravity of abortion, or do we think life is just a game of chance with no meaning or purpose?

As a community, we must stand together to protect the most vulnerable among us and ensure that our laws reflect respect for life, parental rights and the truth that life is a gift. Every Catholic is called by God to be pro-life. I urge you to consider this amendment’s grave implications and join me in opposing it.

And if, in addition to your vote, you would like to support the campaign against this horrendous amendment, please visit www.RightToKnowCO.com, because Coloradans have a right to know what this damaging amendment will do to generations to come.

Yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila
Archbishop of Denver

To join the campaign against the “Right to Abortion” amendment, please visit this website:
www.RightToKnowCO.com.



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Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

As Catholics we are morally obliged to exercise our right to vote. (CCC 2240) We are all called to faithful citizenship (see *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States* at the USCCB website), so I encourage you to register to vote and inform yourselves regarding the issues and candidates keeping in mind Catholic teaching and using prudential judgment when you cast your vote. A candidate's record and past actions are more telling than what their campaign ads say, or what others say about them.

Colorado residents will face many important issues on the 2024 ballot. One of great concern to me is Amendment 79. Also known as the "Right to Abortion" amendment, this measure is extreme and unnecessary.

We know that Catholic teaching has always affirmed the right to life for every child from the moment of conception. Therefore, there can never be a "right" to abortion which takes the life of an unborn child.

Tragically, Colorado law already allows abortion for any reason up to birth. Our state has no age limits on those seeking abortion. Should this amendment pass, our state legislature would be prevented from advancing any common-sense limitations on abortion. Current requirements for parental notification would be invalidated and impossible to reestablish. This could mean, for example, parents would not be made aware if their 15-year-old daughter was being pressured to abort by a boyfriend or school counselor.

Amendment 79 would also remove the current prohibition on public funding for abortion. It would not only allow Medicaid and government insurance to pay for abortions using taxpayer dollars, but it would also pave the way for the Colorado Legislature to broaden taxpayer funded abortions for in-state and out-of-state women including barbaric late-term abortions on babies who feel pain and are able to survive outside the womb.

As a community, we must stand together to protect the most vulnerable among us and ensure that our constitution reflects respect for life and parental rights. As faithful Catholics, I urge all of us to consider this amendments grave implications, we must vote "no" on Amendment 79.

If you would like to support the campaign against this horrific amendment, please visit righttoknowco.org.

Yours in Christ,

+ James R. Golka

Most Reverend James R. Golka
Bishop of Colorado Springs

To join the campaign against the "Right to Abortion" amendment, please visit this website: www.RightToKnowCO.com



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

11 October 2024

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The October 1 Feast of our diocesan patroness, St Therese of Lisieux, has initiated the month of Respect Life. In prayer through this month, I write today about one issue of deep concern on the upcoming Colorado November ballot, Amendment 79 'Right To Abortion.' I must clearly urge you to Vote 'No.'

In hope, faith, and compassion, we are called to protect life in all its stages and forms, preborn and living, all God's children. Much of society today is complacent with the notion of the 'right' to abortion without understanding its dire consequences. Amendment 79 enshrines this tragedy in our constitution and proposes to increase the attack on the unborn, their mothers, families, and the integrity of the communities of Colorado in three ways.

First, it removes all commonsense safeguards to Colorado's 2022 extreme abortion law, the Reproductive Healthy Equity Act (RHEA), and makes abortion an unrestricted and unregulated 'right' for all 9 months -- even on healthy mothers with healthy babies when the child can feel pain and is able to survive outside the womb.

Second, it eliminates the parental notification requirement for their minors receiving an abortion. This will permanently abrogate parents' rights of responsibility for their child's psychological, emotional and medical welfare. Those parental decisions will now be legally assumed and guided by people, pressures and influences outside the family.

Third, Amendment 79 will allow taxpayer funding for all abortions, currently prohibited by the constitution. Countless children known only to God, brought forward both in-state and out-of-state, will die in Colorado, funded by Colorado taxpayer dollars. We will be obligated to participate, regardless of faith or conviction, through our own tax dollars.

Amendment 79 proposes to make these three changes permanent. Period.

As a Catholic nonprofit we are not permitted to support or oppose political candidates or parties in an election. But we are most definitely encouraged to engage and speak on ballot issues that impact our mission. We have the right, and as Christians we have the duty, to speak from the heart and condemn this unjust and irreversible Amendment 79.

As Catholics we have a moral obligation to exercise our right to vote (CCC 2240). We must stand together to ensure that our state constitution reflects respect for life, parental rights, and communal responsibility for all God's children. We must pray, get the word out, work with prolife brothers and sisters, and Vote 'No' on Amendment 79.

To learn more, visit our diocesan website, the Colorado Catholic Conference website for our voter guide, and www.RightToKnowCO.com to support the campaign against Amendment 79. It will also be helpful to review the USCCB website, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship".

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Stephen J. Berg, Bishop of Pueblo