

February, 2024

The spring session of the Illinois General Assembly has been underway since last month. Since last October, 2,770 new bills were introduced for consideration by the deadline, which was Friday, February 9.

Now that bills have been introduced and reference numbers have been assigned, there is an opportunity to be clear about the ramifications of various pending pieces of legislation. You can contact your representatives and senators regarding these items.

Two bills of great concern are HB4867 and HB 4876. The first of these, HB 4867, would amend the Illinois Human Rights Act to make it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against employees for reproductive health decisions the employees make, including deciding to have an abortion. Could it be that churches or church-related schools or charities would not be able to require that employees refrain from killing their own children via abortion? (NOTE: The above description of HB 4867 is updated and corrected as of Feb. 15, 2024.)

Also of much concern is HB4876, which would classify a child as “abused” if parents or others responsible for the child’s welfare deny the child access to “necessary health care, including, but not limited to, primary care services, abortion services, or gender-affirming services.” It also specifies that a minor’s consent to “abortion services and gender-affirming services” cannot be voided because of that person’s age. Concerned Christian citizens might especially consider letting their voices be heard on HB 4867 and HB 4876.

HB 5152 would create a state income tax credit of \$500 for several groups of people who move to Illinois from other states with more restrictive laws on abortion: health care providers, patients of such providers, or the parents of such patients and the parents “qualified” cohabitants. It also would establish a similar tax credit for public school teachers who move to Illinois from other states “as a result of content-based restrictions on educational materials” imposed by those states. The effect would be to attract all of the above to relocate to Illinois, although it is unclear where the money would come from to fund the tax credits contemplated.

Another bill about which to consider communicating with legislators is SB 3499, which would create “the End-of-Life Options for Terminally Ill Patients Act.” This would legitimize certain terminally ill patients to ask their doctors to prescribe “aid-in-dying medication” to be self-administered by the patient. Since patients would take the fatal dose themselves, the bill insists that this is **not** *assisted suicide* – even though they would require the assistance of a physician in prescribing the drug and they would end their own lives by taking it. The sleight-of-hand regarding what to call this is significant, since the state already has laws on the books for suicide prevention and since insurance companies will think differently of death due to “terminal illness” than they would of “suicide.” It might be wondered, with this attempt at re-

definition, what implications this act would have for anyone else who insists on calling the contemplated procedure what it is, namely assisted suicide.

HB 4175 provides that nonpublic schools are not to inflict bodily harm on students such as corporal punishment or “the prolonged maintenance of a student in a physically painful position.” There do not seem to be any nonpublic schools in Illinois that engage in these practices. Still, the question might be raised: To what degree should the state be legislating, say, disciplinary practices for nonpublic schools?

HB 5572 would establish the “Worker Freedom of Speech Act,” which could bring welcome relief to workers who might otherwise be forced by their employers to attend meetings or receive communications that go against the workers’ religious or even political beliefs. However, this could turn into a two-edged sword if it is held to mean that religious employers cannot talk to their workers about religious matters.

Illinois Right to Life Action makes available a voting guide that indicates the positions taken by all members of the state legislature on pro-life issues. It can be accessed at <http://IllinoisRightToLifeAction.org/mission/voter-guides> For more information, telephone (312) 392-0384.