

DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

February 5, 2025

Hon. Robert Lynn, Chair
and Members of the House Judiciary Committee
Legislative Office Building
Concord NH 03301

Re: **HB 232 (Conscience Protections for Healthcare Providers)**

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

As the Director of the Office of Public Policy of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, and on behalf of Bishop Peter Libasci, I write to respectfully register our **support for HB 232.**

Conscience is one of the most fundamental rights that we have as human beings. Part 1 Article 4 of the New Hampshire Constitution expressly recognizes that rights of conscience are inherent in the nature of the human person and that conscience rights are “in their very nature unalienable.” No one - least of all the government- may disregard the obligation that conscience lays upon another person. As Martin Luther King Jr. said in the last sermon of his life, “There comes a time when one must take the position that is neither safe nor politic nor popular, but he must do it because his conscience tells him it is right.”

Most significantly, HB 232 would ensure that health care providers may not be compelled to perform or assist in abortions. The *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services* (known colloquially as “the ERDs”) is a document that is promulgated by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops to provide guidance to Catholic health care institutions and to Catholic health care professionals employed in non-Catholic settings. While the ERDs obviously are written from a Catholic perspective, they are based on an analysis of natural law and thus they might serve to be instructive in any sort of context.

The following is a useful summary of the obligations that Catholic health care providers have with respect to the formation of conscience:

The dialogue between medical science and Christian faith has for its primary purpose the common good of all human persons. It presupposes that science and faith do not contradict each other. Both are grounded in respect for truth and freedom. As new knowledge and new technologies expand, each person must form a correct conscience based on the moral norms for proper health care.

Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (Sixth Edition),
General Introduction.

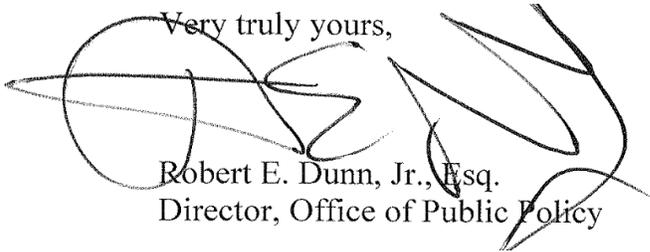
It seems beyond doubt that there can be no graver reason for a person to look to conscience rights and obligations than when the person is asked or compelled to participate in the direct taking of another human life. It will come as no surprise that the ERDs designate abortion as an intrinsically immoral act that is always forbidden.

I know of course that there are those who disagree with that moral principle and who believe that the taking of the life of an unborn child should be freely allowed by the law. But if there is to be any logical consistency with respect to the question of choice as it is exercised within the context of abortion, it cannot be that the choice made by one person must at all costs be vindicated, while the choice made by another must at all costs be thwarted.

Therefore, I respectfully ask that you honor the conscience rights of healthcare providers and vote to recommend HB 232 as ought to pass.

Thank you as always for your kind consideration of our views.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. E. Dunn, Jr.', is written over the typed name and title. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'R' and 'E'.

Robert E. Dunn, Jr., Esq.
Director, Office of Public Policy