



Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities

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Dear Senator:

I am writing to urge your support for the Child Custody Protection Act (S. 403), which will soon be considered by the full Senate. Legislation of this kind has repeatedly and overwhelmingly been approved by the House of Representatives.

S. 403 affirms parents' right to protect their minor daughter from those who have no legal responsibility for her, and who unilaterally decide that a secret abortion is what she needs. The disturbing and growing practice of boyfriends or relatives transporting teenage girls across state lines to evade states' parental involvement laws on abortion is reason enough for quick passage of the Child Custody Protection Act.

The Act will help protect parental autonomy in states with parental notification or consent laws on abortion. It will allow parents to file suit in cases where their fundamental rights and responsibilities regarding the care of their children have been usurped by others. No one else -- boyfriends, in-laws, counselors, friends -- can substitute for the fundamental role of parents.

The need to protect minors in these situations is compelling. Abortion can involve life-long emotional and physical trauma, particularly for young girls. In such situations, the love and support of families is critical and needs to be encouraged. Parents should not be kept in the dark when the welfare of their children and their unborn grandchildren is at stake. Many states have wisely chosen to protect parents' rights in this area, and the intent of their protective laws should not be thwarted.

When this bill reaches the Senate floor, I urge you to vote in favor of the Child Custody Protection Act and to oppose any weakening amendments.

Sincerely,

Cardinal William H. Keeler
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman, Committee for Pro-Life Activities
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops