



Bioethics Public Policy Report June 27, 2023

Catholic Resources

- The US Conference of Catholic Bishops has [voted](#) unanimously to revise Part Three of the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services* (ERDs) to address gender ideology and so-called transitioning. Bishop Daniel Flores (Brownsville, TX), Chair of the USCCB Committee on Doctrine, stated the ERDs will be updated in extensive consultation with “bishops, moral theologians, medical ethicists, physicians, and other various stakeholders in the field of Catholic health care.” Following this consultation, the draft will be “subject to review, discussion, and ultimately the vote of the whole body of bishops.” The full USCCB vote comes in the wake of the March 2023 publication of the Doctrine Committee’s [Doctrinal Note on the Moral Limits to Technological Manipulation of the Human Body](#). In this note, the committee stated, “Catholic health care services must not perform interventions, whether surgical or chemical, that aim to transform the sexual characteristics of a human body into those of the opposite sex or take part in the development of such procedures.”
- Solidarity Health Share is asking the US bishops to [revise](#) the ERDs to prevent any Catholic health care institution from providing medical interventions for so-called gender transitioning. The letter, which is addressed to Archbishop Timothy Broglio, USCCB President, states in part: “We believe it is time for the Catholic healthcare sector to courageously oppose the far-left agenda being pushed by this administration and immediately stop offering [transitioning] procedures and drugs ... We hope the Bishops support our position that people of faith should not be forced to support procedures that contradict their deeply held religious values and convictions.”

Federal Courts

- By allowing a June 20th appeal deadline to pass, the Biden administration is [abandoning](#) its efforts to force religious doctors and hospitals to perform so-called gender transitioning interventions (puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, surgical procedures) against their conscience and professional medical judgment. The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals’ decision in [Sisters of Mercy v. Becerra](#) marked the second time a federal appeals court has blocked the Biden’s mandate, and the second time his administration has chosen not to seek Supreme Court review. Luke Goodrich, Vice President and Senior Counsel at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, stated: “After multiple defeats in court, the federal government has thrown in the towel on its controversial, medically unsupported transgender mandate. Doctors take a solemn oath to ‘do no harm,’ and they can’t keep that oath if the federal government is forcing them to perform harmful, irreversible procedures against their conscience and medical expertise ... This is a win for patients, conscience, and common sense.” For additional information, click [here](#).

National

- Thirty-one Catholic members of the US House of Representatives have signed an open [letter](#) titled “Renewed Statement of Principles” where they reaffirm their full support of abortion. The letter states, in part: “As Catholics, we believe all individuals are free to make their own personal decisions about their bodies, families, and futures. The role of informed conscience is at the very core of our faith ... Our faith and our country’s Constitution demand that no person impose a single religious viewpoint into law or regulation.” The letter concludes by stating: “The fundamental tenets of our Catholic faith — social justice, conscience, and religious freedom — compel us to defend a woman’s right to access abortion. We are committed to advocating for the respect and protection of those making the decision if and when to have children.”
- To commemorate the one-year anniversary of the Dobbs decision, Joe Biden has signed an [executive order](#) designed to expand access to access to all Food and Drug Administration-approved contraceptives and abortifacients. For the White House fact sheet on the executive order, click [here](#).
- While more and more companies are paying their employees’ abortion expenses, the company [PublicSQ](#) (pronounced “Public Square”) is offering its employees \$5000 when they have or adopt a child. Michael Seifert, the company CEO and founder, stated: “We think that ultimately a company is only as strong as the families that built it, and then for us, we’re a pro-family company. We’re unashamed about that.” Speaking about companies that offer abortion “benefits” (including Amazon, Target, Apple, Netflix, Disney, Meta, Uber, and AirBnb), Seifert added: “That’s the sad reality of this, that these companies will pretend to care about ‘women’s health care.’ But at the end of the day, they just don’t want to pay maternity leave.” Click [here](#) for more information.
- Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, Permanente Medical Group, and various physicians are facing a [lawsuit](#) from another detransitioner. Kayla Lovdahl is suing the plaintiffs for fast-tracking her through gender so-called transitioning which she now regrets. The lawsuit begins by stating: “This case is about a team of doctors who decided to perform a damaging, imitation sex-change experiment on Kayla, then a twelve-year-old vulnerable girl struggling with complex mental health comorbidities, who needed care, attention, and psychotherapy, not cross-sex hormones and mutilating surgery.” Lovdahl is represented by the Center for American Liberty which has filed similar suits on behalf of Chloe Cole and Layla Jane. The full text of the lawsuit is available in the above link.
- According to a recent Gallup poll, Americans today are [less supportive](#) than they were two years ago of allowing male athletes to participate in women’s sports. Gallup reported: “A larger majority of Americans now (69%) than in 2021 (62%) say transgender athletes should only be allowed to compete on sports teams that conform with their birth gender. Likewise, fewer endorse transgender athletes being able to play on teams that match their current gender identity, 26%, down from 34%.”
- According to a June 2023 report from the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) titled “Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Behavioral Health: Results from the 2021 and 2022 National Surveys on Drug Abuse and Health,” Americans who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual experience a dramatically lower quality of life across numerous measures. The report [summary](#) states that “lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults are more likely than straight adults to use substances, experience mental health conditions including major depressive episodes, and

experience serious thoughts of suicide.” While the report summary is available on the SAMHSA website, the report itself no longer is.

- Thousands of people marched and prayed outside Dodger Stadium on June 16th to [protest](#) the Los Angeles Dodgers’ honoring the so-called “sisters of perpetual indulgence” with a Community Hero Award before a game with the San Francisco Giants. The “sisters” are an anti-Catholic group of men who dress up as women and promote ideologies and sexual acts contrary to the teaching of the Church. In apparent recognition of the backlash they faced, the Dodgers bestowed the award forty minutes before gametime when there were hardly any people in the stadium (see the video in the link). For further information and perspective, click [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
- The Associated Press (AP) is [reporting](#) that hundreds of billions of dollars in government funds earmarked for COVID relief were either stolen or misused. Specifically, “at least \$280 billion of COVID relief funds were stolen, while another “\$123 billion was wasted or misspent.” These figures total over \$400 billion, or ten percent of the over \$4 trillion in taxpayer money the federal government allocated for COVID relief under both the Trump and Biden administrations. The full report is available [here](#).

State by State

- Joe Biden’s Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has apparently rescinded \$4.5 million in Title X family planning monies from [Oklahoma](#) because the state has enacted laws that protect preborn children. Title X stipulates that “none of the funds appropriated under this title shall be used in programs where abortion is a method of family planning.” The Oklahoma Department of Health reports that the funding was revoked due to the state’s pro-life services being “out of compliance.” Click [here](#) for further information.
- As the result of a 3–3 vote, the [Iowa](#) Supreme Court has prevented the state’s Heartbeat law from taking effect. The law would protect preborn children from abortion after six weeks gestation. The court’s vote means abortion remains legal in the state until 20 weeks gestation. Governor Kim Reynolds (R), who signed the Heartbeat bill into law, stated: “To say that today’s lack of action by the Iowa Supreme Court is a disappointment is an understatement. Not only does it disregard Iowa voters who elected representatives willing to stand up for the rights of unborn children, but it has sided with a single judge in a single county who struck down Iowa’s legislation based on principles that now have been flat-out rejected by the U.S. Supreme Court.”
- Governor Wes Moore (D) has signed an executive order making [Maryland](#) the latest so-called sanctuary state for gender confused minors. The order maintains that “all state agencies shall, to the fullest extent within their authority, take whatever action is necessary” to “protect people or entities in Maryland providing, receiving, assisting in providing or receiving, seeking, or traveling to obtain gender-affirming treatment.” The order was signed during the state’s first-ever Government House Pride reception. California, Minnesota, Colorado, Vermont, and Washington state have also passed so-called trans sanctuary laws.
- [New Jersey](#) Attorney General Matthew Platkin (D) has sued the Middletown, Marlboro, and Manalapan school districts in the state after they enacted policies requiring school officials to inform parents if their child wishes to so-called transition to another gender. The policies apparently conflict with the New Jersey Department of

Education's transgender policy, which mandates that "school district[s] shall keep confidential a ... student's transgender status," even from parents. The lawsuit claims that parental disclosure will "irreparably harm transgender students."

Conscience/Religious Liberty

- In the wake of the federal government's (unsuccessful) attempt to force St. Francis Hospital in Tulsa, OK to extinguish its sanctuary candle, US Representative Kevin Hern (OK), US Senator James Lankford (OK), and thirty-one other members of Congress are inquiring how the Biden administration is respecting constitutionally protected liberties of religious hospitals. In a [letter](#) sent to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra, and Joint Commission President Jonathan Perlin, the signatories maintain that CMS' actions at St. Francis raise concerns that the organization is unfairly targeting health care institutions with religious affiliations. The letter also asks how CMS handles the evaluation of religiously affiliated health care organizations, as well as how CMS has changed its policies under the Biden administration. A press release about the letter from Representative Hern's office is available [here](#).

International

- Researchers at Cambridge University ([United Kingdom](#)) report the development of the world's first "synthetic" human embryo models using embryonic stem cells (ESCs) but no egg or sperm. The process uses a single ESC and develops it into an embryo-like structure that resembles an embryo at about 14 days after fertilization. The models do not contain every component of an embryo, which would likely be necessary for it to become a fully developed human being. The motivation for the research appears to be to allow the study of embryonic development after fourteen days. Currently the "14 day rule" prevents experimentation on a human embryo after this point. For further information and perspective click [here](#).
- The [United Kingdom's](#) Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS England) has voted to drop its opposition to physician assisted suicide and it now maintains a "neutral" position. The change comes after seventy-two percent of members who responded to an online survey indicated they favored changing the College's position. However, the three thousand members who responded represents only nineteen percent of the RCS England's total membership. Of respondents, fifty-two percent supported assisted suicide and twenty percent supported the move to "neutrality."
- The Province of Quebec, [Canada](#) is now the world leader for euthanasia. Nealy eight percent of all deaths in the province in 2022 resulted from euthanasia, a figure higher than that of the Netherlands (4.8 percent) and Belgium (2.3 percent) which both legalized euthanasia years before Canada. In a move that will make these percentages go even higher, lawmakers in Quebec have approved a law that allows people suffering from neurodegenerative diseases (Alzheimer's, etc.) to make advance directives directing they be euthanized before their mental competence degrades and they become unable to make a formal request euthanasia. For further information and perspective, click [here](#).
- A [study](#) published in the journal *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences* demonstrates that women in using hormonal birth control pills have significantly elevated risk for

depression. The study maintains that women who started using these contraceptives as teenagers had a one-hundred-thirty percent higher incidence of symptoms of depression, while the corresponding increase among adult users was ninety-two percent. The study followed more than a quarter of a million women from UK Biobank from birth to menopause. Click [here](#) for further information.

Latest “Bioethics on Air” Podcasts

- Episode 115: [Ethics Consultations and the NCBC’s New Personal Consultations Department](#). In the first of a two-part interview, NCBC ethicist John Di Camillo discusses the NCBC’s ethics consultation service as well as his first year serving as Director of the Center’s Personal Consultations Department.
- Episode 116: [Become an NCBC Fellow or Intern](#). In part 2 of his interview, John Di Camillo explains the rationale and purpose for the NCBC’s new Fellows and Interns program. He explains how one can become a fellow or intern as well as his goals for the program moving forward.

Of Note

- “Our country has always been about expanding freedom. Until now, this court, ignoring its own precedent and the right of privacy in the Constitution [sic]. So we have to reverse that. And Congress has the right to do that one way or another.”—[Nancy Pelosi](#) speaking on the one-year anniversary of the US Supreme Court’s *Dobbs* decision.

Sharing the News: If you have public policy news that you would like to share with the NCBC, or if you have colleagues who would like to receive the Bioethics Public Policy Report, please contact Joe Zalot at 215-871-2014 or jzalot@ncbcenter.org. Previous editions of this report are available through the [Public Policy](#) page of the NCBC website.

Sharing the Resources: If you enjoy receiving the Bioethics Public Policy Report and would like to support its continued publication, please consider making a [donation](#) to the NCBC.

The National Catholic Bioethics Center webpage, available at <http://www.ncbcenter.org/>, is a significant resource for bioethics information. NCBC bioethicists are also on-call for consultation twenty-four hours a day, seven days per week, at 215-877-2660.