

January 29, 2019

To: Montana House Judiciary Committee

From: Matthew Brower, Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference

Re: Testimony in support of HB 284

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Matt Brower [B R O W E R] and I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference. I speak today on behalf of the Roman Catholic bishops of Montana.

The Montana Catholic Conference remains steadfast in opposition to physician-assisted suicide. Legalized assisted suicide represents misguided public policy and would have harmful implications for all of society. For example, we believe that permitting physician-assisted suicide sends the wrong message to the young people of our state where we already have one of the highest suicide rates in the country. It also runs the risk of damaging the fundamental trust that ought to exist within the doctor-patient relationship.

There has been much confusion about the state of the law regarding physician-assisted suicide in Montana following the Montana Supreme Court's 2009 decision in *Baxter v. Montana*. While there are those who argue that assisted suicide is legal in our state, we disagree and believe that our law ought to make clear that Montana prohibits physician-assisted suicide.

For many of the reasons that you have heard or will hear today we stand in support of efforts to address the growing crisis of suicide, including that which is doctor-prescribed. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, on behalf of the Montana Catholic Conference, I thank you for your time.