

Position Paper: Catholic Alumni United for Life

We, concerned alumni of Catholic Universities, have united to express our stand against the anti-life, abortion-promoting Reproductive Health Bill authored by Edcel Lagman et al, now also known as HB (House Bill) 5043.

As graduates of Catholic universities well-known for their spiritual and moral values and academic excellence, we are also deeply dismayed that certain faculty members in some of our own respective alma maters have aired support for the said Bill despite the clear guidelines of our Catholic Faith.

We have therefore chosen to release this position paper in response to the confusion and scandal caused by the actions of those who have made the false claim that one can support HB 5043 and still be consistent with the teachings of our Faith.

HB 5043 uses wrong means to achieve questionable ends

Not all means to an end are justified. HB 5043's supporters may think it has admirable , good ends, such as lowering the incidence of "unwanted" pregnancies, abortion, maternal death, and poverty, but they are mistaken. HB 5043 will **not** achieve these; and even if it could, there are more acceptable – and more effective – means of achieving these ends.

HB 5043 has provisions that will have morally questionable consequences. Some of these are as follows.

HB 5043 promotes abortion through abortifacients

The proponents of HB 5043 have ignored the fact that it promotes abortifacient contraceptives. The Position Paper of the 14 Ateneo faculty members, for example, dismisses this possibility, assuming that health authorities have declared modern contraceptives as non-abortifacient. Yet many studies show that such a dismissal is unjustified, and that these contraceptives can prevent the implantation of a newly-conceived human being.¹

We also note that other contraceptives, like the IUD, are even more abortifacient than oral contraceptives, especially when used as "emergency" contraceptives. Their abortifacient mechanism of action is well-known and documented.²

Any contraceptive that prevents the fertilized egg from implanting, or otherwise causing it to be eventually destroyed, is an abortifacient. HB 5043, however, explicitly promotes and funds such abortifacients.³

It may be argued that the abortifacient mechanism of some oral contraceptives has not been conclusively proven to occur in human beings, or that if it does occur then this occurrence is very rare. To the first argument we would reply that even if there really were any doubt that a contraceptive is abortifacient, the grave stakes involved (the death of a human being) means that the burden of proof is on those who would deny that these are abortifacients. In other words, they must prove that these contraceptives are in fact non-abortifacient. Until such a conclusive determination is achieved we must err on the side of caution and not place the lives of the unborn at risk.

We also note that this imperative to avoid the questionable methods promoted by HB 5043 becomes especially more compelling since there is a safe, modern, and effective alternative: Natural Family Planning.

HB 5043 violates explicit Catholic teaching

Catholic doctrine has always held human life begins at conception. The Catholic Church has also taught that artificial contraception is a grave evil for as far back as can be historically traced. The early Church Fathers such as John Chrysostom, Hippolytus, Jerome, Augustine of Hippo, and many others all condemned contraception. The Catechism of the Catholic Church prohibits it. In the 20th century, Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* in 1968 affirmed this teaching, as did Pope Pius XI in *Casti Connubii* decades before, in 1930. The Pontifical Council for the Family reiterated this teaching in 1997, through the document *Vademecum for Confessors Concerning Some Aspects of the Morality of Conjugal Life*.⁴

HB 5043, however explicitly promotes the use of artificial and abortifacient contraceptive methods and devices, and provides funding for their procurement and distribution. In fact, HB 5043 mandates that contraceptives shall be classified as “essential medicines”.

The claim, therefore, that the Bill is pro-life and is consistent with Catholic doctrine is totally false. No Catholic can support HB 5043 without violating the moral teaching of the Catholic Church.

HB 5043 violates the Philippine Constitution

The Philippine Constitution, in Article II, Section 12, recognizes that human life must be protected from the moment of conception. It states:

“The State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution. It shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception. The natural and primary right and duty of parents in the rearing of the youth for civic efficiency and the development of moral character shall receive the support of the Government.”

An abortifacient, however, causes the eventual destruction of the fertilized egg -- of newly-conceived life. HB 5043, as stated earlier, promotes and funds such abortifacients. It therefore violates the Philippine Constitution.

HB 5043 is anti-women and anti-poor

While HB 5043 claims to prevent maternal death, its supporters fail to grasp that the great majority of such deaths are caused by the lack of proper medical facilities and care. Instead of using resources on controversial contraceptive methods and services, more good will be done by using such funds for basic health care, eliminating the real cause of maternal deaths. The Bill, however, does not address this lack of basic health care services, and will allow the problem to persist while it wastes funds on abortifacients and other ineffective reproductive health measures.

HB 5043 is coercive and violates freedom of speech

Section 21 (e) of the proposed bill lists the following as a prohibited act: "Any person who maliciously engages in disinformation about the intent or provisions of this Act." This provision is overly broad and "disinformation" could (and most probably will) be construed as prohibiting the expression of objections to the Bill, such as what we are presently doing. This provision is obviously going to be used to suppress dissent, and is an undue restriction of freedom of speech.⁵ It has no place in any of the laws of a democratic nation.

Section 17, on the other hand, mandates employers must provide such abortifacients and other contraceptives to employees. It states that, "All Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) shall provide for the free delivery by the employer of reasonable quantity of reproductive health care services, supplies and devices to all workers, more particularly women workers." Employers, therefore, are not given any choice despite the fact that distribution of these abortifacients and contraceptives may be against their conscience.

Section 21, number 5, requires doctors and health workers to dispense such abortifacients and other artificial contraceptive devices and methods. If they refuse to do so on religious grounds, they must still refer those who want to use such abortifacients to another person who will dispense them. Conscientious objectors are thereby required to cooperate in such acts, and if they refuse, they are slapped penalties ranging from one to six months imprisonment and a fine of P10,000-P50,000! HB 5043 eliminates any choice for conscientious objectors and makes no room for their legitimate concerns.

A call for Catholic unity and fidelity to Christ

No Catholic can support HB 5043 and remain faithful to the teachings of Christ, given to the Apostles and handed down through the centuries by the Church. To claim otherwise is deceptive and involves distortions of authentic Catholic teaching and flawed reasoning, if not outright falsehood.

For these reasons, we vigorously oppose HB 5043 and call on our respective alma mater – respected Catholic institutions – to unambiguously, unequivocally and publicly take a stand against HB 5043.

We also call on all Catholic educational institutions to rigorously examine their own different situations to determine whether the education they impart to Catholic students in their charge is faithful to the Magisterium, and to take steps to correct any contradictions being taught in the name of the Church.

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In Christ,

The Signatories

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Endnotes

1. One such study, "Postfertilization Effects of Oral Contraceptives and Their Relationship to Informed Consent," (<http://archfami.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/9/2/126>) came to the following conclusion:

"It seems likely that for perfect use of COCs, postfertilization mechanisms would be likely to have a small but not negligible role. For POPs, COCs with lower doses of estrogen, and imperfect use of any OCs, postfertilization effects are likely to have an increased role. In any case, the medical literature does not support the hypothesis that postfertilization effects of OCs do not exist."

2. CVS/Pharmacy (www.cvs.com), described the functions of IUDs in this manner:

"IUDs are thought to prevent pregnancy by making the womb "unfriendly" to sperm and eggs. Sperm is either killed, or kept from reaching and fertilizing an egg. An IUD also may keep a fertilized egg from attaching to the womb and growing into a baby."

Another study by Stanford JB, Mikolajczyk RT, "Mechanisms of action of intrauterine devices: update and estimation of postfertilization effects," which appeared in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, notes:

"There are many potential mechanisms of action for the intrauterine device (IUD), which vary by type of IUD (inert, copper, or hormonal). This paper reviews the evidence for each potential mechanism of action. On the basis of available data for fertilization rates and clinical pregnancy rates, the relative contribution of mechanisms acting before or after fertilization were quantitatively estimated. These estimates indicate that, although prefertilization effects are more prominent for the copper IUD, both prefertilization and postfertilization mechanisms of action contribute significantly to the effectiveness of all types of intrauterine devices."

3. Section 9 of the Bill subsidizes IUD insertion, among other things. Section 10 classifies hormonal contraceptives, intrauterine devices, and injectables as "essential medicines" and subsidizes their procurement.
4. A short listing of some of these early Church Fathers, along with quotations from their writings, can be found in the January 1996 issue of *This Rock* magazine, published by Catholic Answers. This article may also be found online at: <http://www.ewtn.com/library/ANSWERS/FKBCONTR.HTM>

The relevant sections of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* are Part Three: Life in Christ, Section Two: The Ten Commandments, Chapter Two: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself", Article six: The Sixth Commandment, #2351, 2352, 2363, 2366, 2369, 2370. These sections are online at: <http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a6.htm>

An english version of Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Casti Connubii* may be found online at the Holy See's website: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121930_casti-connubii_en.html

An english version of Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* may be found online at the Holy See's website: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae_en.html

An english version of the *Vademecum* may be found online at the Holy See's website: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_12021997_vademecum_en.html

5. As Cong. Pablo John Garcia said: "Section 21 (e) is plainly stupid, placed there, I believe, by a 'pikon' author. RH bill proponents complain of the 'religious pressure' brought to bear. Section 21 (e) seeks to elevate the RH bill into a state-mandated religion."