



Statement by Bishop Burbidge and Bishop Knestout on Governor Northam’s Signature of Abortion Expansion Legislation

March 12, 2021

Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of the Diocese of Arlington and Bishop Barry C. Knestout of the Diocese of Richmond issued the following statement on Governor Northam’s signature of legislation that drastically expands abortion coverage in Virginia:

“Governor Northam has crossed yet another tragic threshold by inserting abortion without limits into Virginia’s health benefits exchange. We decry the enactment of this deplorable policy, which is built on the destructive lie that abortion is healthcare. We are saddened when we contemplate the increased number of unborn lives likely to be lost as a result.

“The exchange is a virtual marketplace created under the federal Affordable Care Act, through which an estimated 240,000 Virginians access their health plans. Under state law for the past decade, plans participating in Virginia’s health exchange were prohibited from covering most abortions. This fundamentally pro-life provision undoubtedly saved many lives. Starting July 1 of this year, however, that provision will be eradicated from our law. Consequently, and tragically, health plans in the exchange will be allowed to cover abortions for any reason.

“In many cases, people receive public subsidies to purchase these plans. Beginning July 1, even these taxpayer-funded plans can cover abortions without limitation. This means that taxpayers will be forced to fund plans that cover abortion on demand.

“Without despair, and with maximum determination, we will continue our advocacy for the preeminent priority of protecting unborn children from this threat. So many lives, who have no voice except ours, depend on it.”

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