Statement by Bishop Burbidge and Bishop Knestout on State Budget Actions

June 17, 2022

On Wednesday, Governor Youngkin proposed two vitally important budget amendments – one to save lives, and the other to provide a lifeline to students in need. We applaud and deeply thank the Governor for his leadership in offering both of these extremely important proposals.

This afternoon, one of these amendments passed and one of them failed.

The amendment that passed restores full funding of the Education Improvement Scholarships Tax Credits program, thereby avoiding a previously proposed severe cut. The EISTC is Virginia's only school choice program and provides low-income students critical financial assistance to attend schools that best meet their needs. Maintaining the program at full strength, as the budget now does, is vital. We express our gratitude to each legislator in the House and Senate whose vote ensured this successful outcome. The unanimous vote in the Senate was a strong display of bipartisan support.

The amendment that failed would have adopted the federal Hyde Amendment abortion funding restrictions in the state budget. Across the country, the Hyde Amendment has saved at least 2.5 million babies from abortion. Because the Senate rejected the Governor's Hyde Amendment proposal by one vote, an opportunity to save lives in Virginia was tragically forfeited, and taxpayers here will continue to be forced to pay for abortions beyond what federal law requires. We acknowledge with deep gratitude each legislator in the House and Senate who voted in favor of protecting life, and at the same time express our profound disappointment that this commonsense, life-saving policy failed to pass and will not be part of the state budget.

We thank the thousands of Catholics in our two dioceses who took action on the Virginia Catholic Conference action alerts in support of both of these amendments. With determination and zeal, we will continue to pursue policies both to protect life and to provide education opportunities.

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