

2024 Iowa Life Advocacy Priorities

Preventing Physician Assisted Suicide, which is when a physician helps someone kill themselves.

A bill was filed again in 2024 to legalize assisted suicide in Iowa. Lutheran Family Service has worked in opposition to this legislation at the capitol as well as educating our LCMS members about the dangers. Thankfully, this bill failed to get out of committee this year. Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS) supporters are gaining ground around the nation and are likely to continue to put pressure on the Iowa legislature to pass such a measure.

In your packet of resources, turn to the page with a US map. As you can see (PAS) is legal in New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Vermont, California, Colorado, Hawaii, New Jersey, Maine, and the District of Columbia. This means 73.4 million people in the U.S. now have access to PAS. However, in 2023, both Oregon and Vermont have removed state residency requirements. People from any state can go there to legally commit suicide with the aid of a doctor. Technically then, everyone in the U.S. now has access to Physician Assisted Suicide. Fourteen states have introduced bills in 2024. Some, as in Iowa, have not moved forward. Others are active bills such as Delaware, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Many of the states where PAS is legal continue to pursue expansion bills. These expansion bills include things like reducing the waiting period before the deadly drug could be prescribed. Both California and Washington state went from 15 days to 48 hours. Washington's new expansion allows medical providers other than doctors to administer the drug. The Washington bill also allows for the drug to be sent through the mail. Oregon is considering allowing someone else to administer the poison for people with disabilities unable to do so themselves. We move ever closer to proving once again the axiom: assisted suicide always leads to euthanasia.

Preventing Abortion, which is the killing of a child before he or she is born.

The legal status in Iowa prohibits abortion after 20 weeks gestation; however, that is subject to change. A ruling from the Iowa Supreme Court is expected (likely June 2024) on the Heartbeat Law that was originally passed in 2017 but was never enforced. When the decision is rendered, we also expect to hear from the court regarding the standard that will measure all future abortion restrictions in Iowa, either by rational basis or undue burden. Please join us in praying for Justices Christensen, May, Mansfield, McDermott, McDonald, Oxley and Waterman that they may determine rational basis as the standard which would lay the groundwork needed to protect all preborn boys and girls in Iowa.

The leadership of Iowa's 90th General Assembly determined the best course of action was to wait on the Iowa Supreme Court's decision before passing any more abortion restriction legislation. While we wait on the Court's decision, work is still being done at the legislature that supports and lays the groundwork for what comes next.

Polling of our self-proclaimed, Iowa Pro-Life Legislators resulted in the following information about how far they would go to protect preborn children's lives:

1. In the Iowa House, 45 out of 100 Representatives are willing to express support for a Life at Conception Bill **with exceptions for rape and incest.** While this is not the gold standard, without those exceptions, the bill would likely obtain less than 35 votes.
2. In the Iowa Senate, 18 out of 50 are firm supporters of Life and Conception without exceptions. Another 10 are in the "maybe" category with 26 votes needed to pass the Senate.
3. A little over half of the pro-life Iowa legislators would be content to settle with the Heartbeat Law if it is upheld and not pursue additional abortion restrictions. There were many who answered by expressing strong support for Heartbeat, but were uncomfortable and noncommittal when asked about potentially going further.

What can you do today? Talk to your legislator about the following:

- God gives value to every person no matter the circumstances of their conception. They deserve to be protected. Show them how God's word supports that.
- Pray with them to be rooted in God's word, protected from enemies, and receive wisdom from the Holy Spirit.
- Ask your legislator to continue to financially support Pregnancy Resource Centers who do not provide or refer for abortions funding. This is known as the MOMS Act. (SF2252 and HF2267)
- Ask your legislator to support HF2617 which requires Human Growth and Development to include Life in the Womb to our Iowa students.
- HF2276 allows for the zoning of maternity homes as residential property.
- Encourage your legislator to support future abortion legislation and in particular, **Life at Conception without exceptions.**
- Encourage your congregation to make their voice known to legislators by making a phone call, writing a letter, sending an email, or through an in-person appointment.

What can you do after today to support life in your congregation and community?

- EDUCATE & TAKE ACTION
 - Use your resource packet to provide ongoing education and attention to God's truth for life issues
 - Legislative Priorities info
 - Physician Assisted Suicide map and info
 - Pregnancy Resource Center locations
 - Better Together graphic to show how LFS and Many Hearts are working together with Pregnancy Resource Centers and women's health providers
 - Use the LCMS Government Servant sheet for a bulletin insert, regular in-church prayer, and for members to pray for at home.
 - Include this web link: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find> in your bulletin to help your congregation find and contact legislators
 - Gather a group from your congregation to hang Many Hearts Unplanned Pregnancy Support tear-away posters. Many Hearts is the unplanned pregnancy counseling ministry of Lutheran Family Service.
 - Find your closest Pregnancy Resource Center (PRC)
 - Encourage members to volunteer, support, pray for and join the Board of Directors as they provide life-affirming outreach to women facing unplanned pregnancy
 - Bring Many Hearts Unplanned Pregnancy Support materials to Pregnancy Resource Centers, OBGYNs, and other physicians, to make them aware of services that would greatly benefit their clients who are facing unplanned pregnancy and/or considering adoption
 - Encourage congregation members to vote for life-affirming candidates and run for public office
 - Schedule a "Life Sunday" or "life issues" presentation for Lutheran Family Service to come and help you educate members on topics of abortion, ways to support women facing unplanned pregnancy and/or single mothers, physician assisted suicide, hospice, advance directives and more. Reach out to Rev. Mick Wolfram at mwolfram@LutheranFamilyService.org.