



TEXAS
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE



September 23, 2015

Dear Supreme Court Advisory Committee:

As your committee develops recommendations for rules regarding the implementation of HB 3994, we wanted to provide you with our suggestions. As advocates for the protection of life and parental rights, our organizations were active participants in the development and passage of HB 3994.

The Supreme Court of the United States requires states with parental notification and consent laws to have an alternate process for a minor to obtain an abortion without parental involvement, most commonly, a judicial bypass. This procedure must be expedient and confidential.

House Bill 3994 significantly improves Texas' judicial bypass procedure, which has been in law since 1999, while maintaining an expedient and confidential process. The changes made by the 84th Legislature increase parental rights and protect minors from making a life-changing decision without proper parental guidance.

Among the changes made to the process are an increased burden of proof, limited venue, extended time for judges to make decisions, and improved fact-finding tools. It also provides increased reporting of sexual abuse. Further, it provides increased reporting and transparency throughout the process.

Attached, you will find a draft of the rules that we submit for your consideration. These rules reflect the changes made in HB 3994 and are consistent with the guidance the Supreme Court of the United States has given the states. These rules will ensure that parental rights are respected and minors are protected as the Legislature intended.

Thank you for your work on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Stephen Casey and Greg Terra
Co-Founders and Counsel
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