COVID-19 Public Policy Report
May 13, 2020

National

- For up-to-date information on the pandemic, see Coronavirus.gov. This website is jointly maintained by the White House, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Presidential prayer during coronavirus pandemic: President Donald Trump offered the following during the National Day of Prayer on May 7: “Throughout our history and times of challenge, our people have always called upon the gift of faith, the blessing of belief, the power of prayer, and the eternal glory of God. I ask all Americans to join their voices and their hearts in spiritual union as we ask our Lord in heaven for strength and solace, for courage and comfort, for hope and healing, for recovery and for renewal.”
- Catholic parishes receiving Coronavirus funds: According to estimates from the Diocesan Fiscal Management Conference, an association of finance officers of Catholic dioceses, between twelve and thirteen thousand Catholic parishes in the US applied for loans under the Paycheck Protection Program. To date, approximately nine thousand parishes have received funding.
- Telemedicine abortions on the rise: The number of women seeking at-home, chemical abortions during the coronavirus pandemic through an experimental US telemedicine provider has reportedly doubled during the coronavirus pandemic. Gynuity Health Products of New York sponsors a TelAbortion program that is active in 13 states and it reported that its telemedicine abortions in March and April were twice as high as those in January and February. The organization also stated that the ability to get chemical abortion medications through the mail “is particularly crucial in the COVID-19 crisis” and added that it is “working to expand [its telemedicine program] to as many states as possible.”
- Bishops urge DOJ action on porn industry: Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone (San Francisco), Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth; Archbishop Paul Coakley (Oklahoma City), Chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development; and Bishop David A. Konderla (Tulsa) Chairman of the Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, are urging the Department of Justice (DOJ) to protect victims of human trafficking and exploitation at the hands of the porn industry by enforcing obscenity laws and prosecuting producers of violent pornography. In an April 30th letter, the bishops stated, “We write to you today to urge you to confront the ongoing harms wrought by the pornography industry and to protect its victims. This should include enforcement of obscenity laws, investigation of pornography producers and
website owners for criminality, national leadership in encouraging states and localities to develop rigorous policies against the industry and in the service of survivors, and more.” The bishops specifically noted the rise of “Pornhub” which is offering free premium subscriptions during the coronavirus pandemic.

- **Judge tells lawyers, “Don’t call men males”:** District Judge Robert Chatigny has instructed lawyers representing three female high school athletes in Connecticut who are suing to prevent boys from competing in girls’ events to not refer to biological men as males. In a phone call to attorneys from Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), the judge stated: “What I’m saying is you must refer to them as ‘transgender females’ rather than as ‘males.’ Again, that’s the more accurate terminology ... Referring to these individuals as ‘transgender females’ is consistent with science, common practice and perhaps human decency. To refer to them as ‘males,’ period, is not accurate, certainly not as accurate, and I think it’s needlessly provocative. ... This isn’t a case involving males who have decided that they want to run in girls’ events. This is a case about girls who say that transgender girls should not be allowed to run in girls’ events.” ADF lawyers have petitioned that that Chatigny recuse himself from the case.

**State by State**

- **Wolf in abortion clothing: Pennsylvania** Governor Tom Wolf has vetoed a bill that would have expanded telemedicine in the state because it specifically prevented doctors from using tele-visits to prescribe chemical abortion medication mifepristone. Wolf is an ardent abortion supporter. Republican lawmakers criticized Wolf for the veto as it was ideologically driven and denied Pennsylvanians increased access to tele-medicine.

- **Judge says pay Planned Parenthood:** Starting in 2015, David Daleiden and the Center for Medical Progress (CMP) released a series of videos showing that Planned Parenthood managers were illegally selling the body parts of aborted children. Now US District Court Judge William Orrick of the Northern District of California has ordered that Daleiden and others connected with CMP pay Planned Parenthood $1,259,370 for violating unfair competition laws.

**International**

- **Using COVID-19 to force euthanize:** Supporters of euthanasia in Canada are lamenting that as COVID-19 pandemic is severely curtaining the transfer of patients, individuals in long-term care (LTC) facilities may not be able to access euthanasia. As such, they want to force faith-based providers to perform so-called “medical aid in dying” (MAiD) in their facilities. In an April 2020 letter, the Canadian Association of MAiD Assessors and Providers (CAMAP) stated: “A significant number of LTC facilities and many acute care hospitals are faith-based and prohibit [euthanasia] ... CAMAP believes that if necessary, provincial governments should issue directives to all faith-based institutions requiring them to allow [euthanasia] when the transfer of patients has been prohibited for reasons of public health.”

- **Peru uses COVID-19 to advance abortion:** On April 22nd, Victor Zamora, the Peruvian Minister of Health, issued a directive calling for the nation to allow abortion for pregnant women who test positive for the coronavirus. Abortion is illegal in Peru except when a pregnancy would cause death or permanent harm to the mother. Now congresswoman Luz
Milagros Cayguaray Gambini is fighting back. In a May 5 letter, the congresswoman challenged Zamora to “indicate what the legal basis” is for the directive and to indicate “the scientific and medical basis [it] is based upon.” The Arequipa Doctors for Life Association also criticized the directive stating, “At this time in which all our efforts as a nation should be aimed at improving our precarious health system to mitigate the serious impact of the pandemic, the circumstances are being used to dictate measures that threaten the lives of Peruvians in their most vulnerable stage, life in the womb.”

- **UK churches closed until July:** Government officials in the United Kingdom have announced that churches are in “step three” of its coronavirus reopening plan (along with beauty salons, pubs, and movie theaters), thus they will open “no earlier than 4 July.” The Catholic bishops conference of England and Wales expressed great disappointment and responded, in part, by stating, “The timing and the manner of the opening of churches touches profound sensitivities and spiritual needs. The government’s document and statements fail to recognize this.”

- **Religious order seeks to remove its name from euthanasia:** The Congregation of the Brothers of Charity of Belgium is fighting to have its name removed from a lay, fifteen-hospital network bearing its name that that euthanizes psychiatric patients. The lay network, Brothers of Charity Organization, acquiesced to Belgian law and approved euthanasia guidelines for its facilities in 2017. In response, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith stated that these hospitals “will no longer be able to consider themselves Catholic institutions.” Br. René Stockman, general superior of the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity, has been working with the network to try to remove the order’s name, but the network intends to maintain it.

**NCBC Resources**

- Click [here](#) for updated resources from the National Catholic Bioethics Center including the following new materials
  - “Embracing the Gift of Christian Spirituality in Nursing” by DiAnn Ecret
  - “The Duty to Care During a Pandemic” by Philip Cerroni, DiAnn Ecret, and Edward Furton
  - Podcast: “COVID-19 and Ethical Challenges to Vaccine Development” with John DiCamillo

**Of note**

- **Archbishop Joseph Naumann (Kansas City, Kansas), Chair of the USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, speaking of the need to develop an ethical vaccine for COVID-19:** “As a culture and society, we’re going to enormous lengths to try to protect the elderly and those that might be susceptible to the virus where it’s much more dangerous for them … hopefully that can translate [this] into a similar concern for the lives of the unborn as well.”

- **First Lady Melania Trump at the National Day of Prayer (May 7):** “On this National Day of Prayer let us take a moment to extend our deepest sympathy to those who have lost their loved ones to COVID-19 ... Let us pray for the ill, the ones who are suffering, and those who are serving on the front lines. When evil darkens our world, give us light. When despair numbs our souls, give us hope. When we stumble and fall, lift us up. When doubts
assail us, give us faith. When nothing seems sure, give us trust. When ideas fade, give us vision. When we lose our way, be our guide that we may find serenity in your presence and purpose in doing your will. Amen.”

**Sharing the News:** If you have public policy news that you would like to share with the NCBC, please contact Joe Zalot at 215-871-2014 or jzalot@ncbcenter.org.

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The National Catholic Bioethics Center webpage, available at [http://www.ncbcenter.org/](http://www.ncbcenter.org/), is a significant resource for bioethics information. NCBC bioethicists are also on-call for consultation twenty-four hours a day, seven days per week, at 215-877-2660.