



## Bioethics Public Policy Report January 30, 2024

### State by State

- New York and Massachusetts have unveiled assisted suicide bills in their respective States. In New York, the Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) Act would allow the terminally ill to request “medication” to commit suicide so long as the request is totally voluntary and in the presence of at least two adult witnesses. Massachusetts’ “End of Life Options Act” would allow a “mentally capable adult” resident of the State to make an oral request for “medication” to commit suicide. For further information, click [here](#).
- Last Wednesday, the Ohio state legislature voted to override Republican Governor Mike DeWine’s veto of a bill that will prohibit sex changes for children by a vote of 65–28 in the House and 23–9 in the Senate. Under this law, doctors cannot perform transgender surgeries on children that would sterilize them, that would remove otherwise healthy tissue and organs, or that would cause an aesthetic change. It also prohibits the prescription of puberty blockers. For further information, click [here](#).
- Nebraska has introduced the Uniform Law Commission’s model Health-Care Decisions Act as LB1168. The Act deals with advance directives and defines “health-care decision” as including “direction to provide, withhold, or withdraw artificial nutrition or hydration, mechanical ventilation, or other health care.” To track the progress of the bill, click [here](#). For further information on the Act itself, click [here](#).

### Federal Courts

- Six pro-life advocates’ trial for violation of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act began last week. The group had been arrested in 2021 for sitting in an abortion clinic in Tennessee, preventing the clinic from performing abortions. The defendants—Coleman Boyd, Chester Gallagher, Dennis Green, Heather Idoni, Paul Vaughn, and Calvin Zastrow—are all between 50 and 70 years old, but they could face up to 11 years in prison and \$250,000 in fines. For further information, click [here](#).
- A Catholic nurse practitioner, Gunna Kristofersdottir, has sued CVS for revoking her religious exemption from prescribing hormonal contraceptives. Kristofersdottir had been granted a religious accommodation between 2014 and 2022, but CVS announced the revocation of all such religious accommodations from prescribing contraceptives in August 2021. For further information, click [here](#).
- Two Christian teachers got to go back to work at Rincon Middle School in Escondido, California, after a federal judge found a requirement for teachers to deceive parents about their child’s gender identity a violation of their First Amendment rights under

the Constitution and ordered the school district to let them return to work. For further information, click [here](#).

## **National**

- On the 51st anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the Biden administration, per the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), announced new measures that would increase access to surgical and chemical abortion, as well as contraception, through the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA). President Biden's HHS insists that "emergency care" can require emergency room abortions, despite the lack of any such mention in EMTALA itself. States such as Idaho and Texas, who have near total abortion bans, are in the midst of legal battles with the Biden administration over these administrative directives. For further information, click [here](#).
- Tens of thousands gathered in Washington, DC, for the March for Life, notwithstanding the snowy conditions. This is the second March held after the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* by the *Dobbs* decision issued in 2022. For further information, click [here](#).
- A resolution passed in the House of Representatives to protect funding for pro-life pregnancy resource centers, even as the Biden administration seeks to deny such funding through its federal assistance program. The vote was along party lines in the House, and, so, it will face an uphill battle in the Democrat-controlled Senate. For further information, click [here](#).
- Senator Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn) introduced the Woman's Right to Know Act, which would require abortion providers to inform women seeking abortion of the risks involved and relevant information about the development of their unborn child at least 24 hours prior to any abortion. For further information, click [here](#).

## **Conscience/Religious Liberty**

- The U.S. bishops issued a report titled "State of Religious Liberty in the United States" warning that attacks on places of worship could be life-threatening to people of faith in the United States. The bishops said, "There is no greater threat to religious liberty than for one's house of worship to become a place of danger, and the country sadly finds itself in a place where that danger is real." The report comes now, as attacks on places of worship, especially Catholic churches, in the United States are increasing in the wake of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* by *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* in 2022. To read the report, click [here](#). For further information, click [here](#).

## **International**

- Surveys show that 80% of Dutch voters favor the passage of the "Completed Life" Bill, Bill D66, in Parliament. The bill would allow those over 75 who "feel they've reached the end of a completed life" to seek euthanasia after three meetings with an "end of life counselor." For further information, click [here](#).

- The German state media voiced “concern” about the influence of American influence in the German pro-life movement. Citing the research of Ulli Jentsch, who “has been researching the extreme right, Christian fundamentalism and the ‘pro-life’ movement in Germany for more than 20 years,” German state journalist Helen Whittle noted that “the anti-abortion movement in the US has been a role model for activists in Germany and Europe since at least the 1990s.” For further information, click [here](#).

### Of Note

- The religiously unaffiliated, or “nones,” comprise the largest percentage in calculations of religious affiliation in the United States for the first time, according to the Pew Research Center. Nones account for 28%, and the next largest group is Catholics at 20%. While 69% of nones still believe in God, they decline to join any one organized religion. For further information, click [here](#).
- In a recent message, Pope Francis warned of the potential dangers of artificial intelligence, saying, “How can we remain fully human and guide this cultural transformation to serve a good purpose?” He warned specifically against trying “to become *like* God without God.” To read the message, click [here](#). For further information, click [here](#).
- Pope Francis stated definitively that under *Fiducia supplicans* “the union is not blessed” if persons in a same-sex relationship were to ask for a “pastoral and spontaneous blessing,” and, moreover, that the whole purpose of this is “to concretely show the closeness of the Lord and the Church to all those who, finding themselves in different situations, ask for help to carry forward—sometimes to begin—a journey of faith.” For further information, click [here](#).
- Ahead of the March for Life, Operation Rescue published a report citing that 137 abortion clinics have closed since the Dobbs decision, which overturned Roe v. Wade. For further information, click [here](#).

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