

*“An educational group for pro-life nurses”*

## Groups press President Biden to eliminate conscience protections they deem ‘discriminatory’

By Nancy Flanders

President Joe Biden is facing pressure from fellow Democrats to eliminate a division of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) created under the Trump administration in 2018. The Conscience and Religious Freedom Division in the HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) was established to ensure the federal enforcement of laws that exist to protect the fundamental rights of conscience and religious freedom.

“Laws protecting religious freedom and conscience rights are just empty words on paper if they aren’t enforced,” said OCR Director Roger Severino at the time. “No one should be forced to choose between helping sick people and living by one’s deepest moral or religious convictions, and the new division will help guarantee that victims of unlawful discrimination find justice.”

Both the Democratic Women’s Caucus (DWC) and Secular Democrats of America are calling on President Biden to end the division. Sixty female Democrat lawmakers penned a letter to Biden in December encouraging him to “use executive powers to immediately begin reversing the harm wrought by the outgoing administration...” On the list of their demands is the elimination of the Conscience and Religious Freedom Division of HHS, claiming that it “has been weaponized to justify discrimination.”

Similarly, on the list of demands from the Secular Democrats of America is, “Dismantle the HHS Conscience and Religious Freedom Division,” along with the call to repeal an executive order that protected free speech and religious liberty, and to withdraw funding for pro-life pregnancy centers and abstinence-only education programs. Another demand is to increase vaccination rates by repealing all nonmedical exemptions to mandatory vaccination for children in schools and daycare centers.

The elimination of the Conscience and Religious Freedom Division could end the enforcement of conscience protections that currently exist for medical professionals who don’t want to participate in abortion or euthanasia. Since its inception, OCR has dealt with multiple cases in which a medical professional’s conscience protections were ignored, including a case in which a nurse at the University of Vermont Medical Center was forced to participate in an abortion after she was led to believe the baby had been miscarried.

In December, OCR disallowed \$200 million in federal Medicaid funds from going to California after the state illegally mandated all health care plans under the regulation of the California Department of Managed Health Care to cover abortion without exception.

Opponents of the Conscience and Religious Freedom Division say it allows for discrimination towards people based on their gender, sexual orientation, or decision to abort. However, these opponents are unconcerned with the religious discrimination that would exist against those who do not vaccinate due to religious objections or those who would be forced to commit abortions—which abortion workers themselves have said is “barbaric” and has caused them emotional harm.

Case in point: Currently, a bill in New Mexico seeking to eliminate conscience protections for medical professionals who don’t want to participate in abortion is causing some doctors to say they will be forced to leave the state if the law is passed.

“Though some of the existing law is unenforceable because of *Roe v. Wade*, this statute contains important provisions that protect our doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals,” said state Sen. Gregg Schmedes.

“As a medical doctor, I have heard from many of my colleagues that if they lose these vital conscience protections, they will consider leaving the state which would threaten healthcare access for many New Mexicans.

“Being forced to participate in acts that a person finds immoral—like killing innocent human beings under the guise of “health care”—does not equal discrimination toward patients.

—LiveAction.org, February 2, 2021



# Michigan Nurses For Life



## Our Purpose:

...To raise the consciousness of the nursing profession to protect all human life from conception until natural death

...To form an educated core of nurses who can speak for their profession by acting as a community resource for life issues

...To promote public education and awareness about life issues on both ends of the spectrum, from abortion to euthanasia

...To uphold and defend human life in all stages and conditions of development

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Colleagues,

Some of us are still getting used to what the media and some politicians are calling the "new normal." Personally, I prefer the "old normal" to what we are seeing today.

One thing that I find deeply disturbing is the idea that there are some groups in Washington, DC (the Democratic Women's Caucus (DWC) and the Secular Democrats of America, to name two) who are pressuring Mr. Biden to eliminate the HHS Conscience and Religious Freedom Division. This division of the Office for Civil Rights was established to ensure the federal enforcement of laws that exist to protect the fundamental right of conscience and religious freedom. Those who are promoting its removal do so under the guise that "it has been weaponized to justify discrimination." What about discriminating against our deeply-held moral beliefs? Why is it ok to question me or screen me to be sure that I follow the current narrative regarding our interaction with our patients, and if we do not toe the mark carefully enough, we should seek another profession? It would appear that it is alright to pick and choose who may face discrimination.

When I donned that white cap those many years ago, I never for a moment thought I would be required to be less than I am as a person and a nurse. I never thought for a moment that I would have to leave my moral beliefs at the door of the hospital when I entered each day. I never thought I would, for the sake of my career, be required to remain silent when that silence would be interpreted as acceptance of the unacceptable.

And you know what? I will not do any of those things. The very thought of a governmental body suggesting that I must be "vetted" for the political correctness of my beliefs before I can use my education and my experience to advocate and care for my patients is simply unacceptable.

I could acquiesce because I fear job loss or harassment from co-workers, but then I could no longer be the nurse I am meant to be.

Love Life, Diane



## Upcoming Events

### TIME TO RENEW YOUR MNFL MEMBERSHIP

#### Crossroads Care Center's Virtual Benefit Event

Friday, March 5, 7:00 p.m.

Contact: [www.CrossroadsCareCenter.org](http://www.CrossroadsCareCenter.org)  
or 248-293-0070 x 109

#### 40 Days for Life, Spring Campaign

February 17 – March 28

Contact: [40daysforlife.com](http://40daysforlife.com)

#### LIFESPAN Baby Showers

To benefit local Pregnancy Help Centers  
Sunday, March 14

Call the Main Office to register your church: 734-524-0162

#### Annual LIFESPAN Dinner – Featuring Diamond & Silk

Tuesday, May 4 - San Marino Club, Troy  
Reservations and information: 248-816-1546

# In Loving Memory — Jackie Blackwood

It is with great sadness we say goodbye to a dear friend. Jackie Blackwood, 73, passed from this life Thursday, December 31, 2020 at her home in Taylors, South Carolina. She was born in Detroit, Michigan. Jackie is survived by her husband, Benny, and her daughter Tashia. A service to celebrate Jackie's life will be held at a later date in Michigan.

By Mary Lou Temple. RN

I met Jackie Blackwood, co-founder of Michigan Nurses for Life, over 25 years ago; we both were interested in joining a Michigan based pro-life organization for nurses, but there was nothing in the metro Detroit area. We both called the Educational Center for Life in Troy, and were given each other's phone number.

After speaking on the phone several times, we met at a local restaurant to talk more about our thoughts and ideas. We were joined by Phyllis Sullivan, another nurse who was part of a pro-life nursing organization that dissolved in the 1980s. She encouraged us to persevere and we did!

We came up with a purpose statement, organizational structure, bylaws and worked toward a 501 c3 non-profit status. We met with other like-minded nurses, had a little newsletter and planned our first conference, held May 10, 1997, at Madonna University. The title was: *Ethical Decision Making from Beginning to End*. Over 100 nurses attended that first conference.

In 1996, Jackie and her husband, Benny, had adopted a nine month-old Russian girl, Tashia, who had multiple health problems, and Jackie was never able to be consistently involved in the organization. But she was a great dreamer and visionary, and always encouraged us to move forward. She knew people in the pro-life movement, and they spoke at our conferences. She continued on our board until she moved to South Carolina in 2015.

Jackie was an LPN by profession, and spent her career working at Eloise Psychiatric Hospital, Henry Ford Hospital and various nursing homes. She was an enthusiastic pro-life nurse in whatever she did.

I believe that, as in the book of Esther, God called Jackie to Nurses for Life, "for such a time as this." We pray for her family and that God would raise up other like-minded nurses to lead and join our movement.

Memorials for Jackie may be sent to Michigan Nurses for Life.

# Biden Rescinds Mexico City Policy

Pro-life nations have lost a strong advocate in the fight for life as the United States will once again fund international organizations that promote abortion. As expected, newly-inaugurated President Joe Biden rescinded the Mexico City Policy on Thursday, January 28, 2021, which prohibits U.S. foreign aid from funding international organizations that refer for abortion or commit abortions. Abortion proponents hope the rule will be permanently revoked. Biden also reversed the Trump administration's Protect Life Rule, which prohibited Title X family planning dollars from funding abortion businesses.

The Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance Policy—better known as the Mexico City Policy, after the location in which President Ronald Reagan first enacted the rule—bans U.S. federal funding for international organizations that commit abortions or refer women to abortion providers. Opponents have labeled it a "global gag rule" but the majority of Americans support it.

According to *Newsweek*, 75% of Americans oppose funding overseas abortions with taxpayer dollars, including 61% of those surveyed who call themselves "pro-choice." Similarly, a January 2021 Marist Poll found that 77% of Americans oppose using tax dollars to support international abortion, including 64% of those who consider themselves to be "pro-choice." —*Information excerpted from Live Action News, info@liveaction.org, January 31, 2021*

## PP Advocates for Assisted Suicide

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Kristen Hanson, whose husband J.J. Hanson publicly opposed assisted suicide during his fight with brain cancer, organized the rally, and spoke on his behalf. "Thankfully J.J. did not end his own life, but he said if he had those pills with him he might have taken them, and you cannot undo that," she said, explaining that her husband lived over three years longer than doctors had originally predicted. Hanson, a former Marine, suffered from the same form of brain cancer as assisted suicide advocate Brittany Maynard, and openly spoke about the pressure legal assisted suicide places on people like him. He also criticized Maynard for using her illness as a means to legalize doctor-facilitated death, calling it "a bad example for others who had this form of brain cancer, explaining that "fewer people going into clinical trials" actually "removes a large part of the ability to fight against disease."

Yet Hanson fought bravely, and never stopped speaking out about how people who choose not to die are still living full lives. His wife now carries on his legacy for him. "I was told you don't have an option," he said in an interview. "You can die dignified if you commit suicide...To me it just doesn't make sense. It's kind of a reflection of where our society is."

—*LiveAction.org, January 13, 2021*



## Planned Parenthood is now advocating for assisted suicide in New York

*Editor's Note: Planned Parenthood Goes Womb to Tomb*  
By Cassy Fiano-Chesser

The state of New York is one of the latest to consider embracing assisted suicide. Senate Bill S3151A, or the Medical Aid in Dying Act, was originally introduced in 2017, but died in committee in March of 2018. Another version failed in 2019, yet Assemblyman Kevin Cahill has announced his intentions to resubmit the bill for consideration in 2021—and one Planned Parenthood political action affiliate is showing its support.

Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts (PPESA) released its 2021 legislative priorities, which largely consisted of expanding abortion—but buried at the bottom was a passage linking abortion and assisted suicide under the “bodily autonomy” umbrella.

*The right to bodily autonomy and self-determination is not constrained to one aspect of being, but rather the spectrum of life. PPESA supports passage of the Medical Aid in Dying Act, to provide adults with the agency to make end-of-life decisions for themselves, with dignity and compassion.*

The notion of the “spectrum of life” adopted in Planned Parenthood's wording bears a striking similarity to language used by the pro-life movement, which advocates for protecting human beings from womb to tomb. The difference, however, is that Planned Parenthood is arguing for the right to *kill* human beings at any age, from womb to tomb.

Cahill is looking to have the New York legislature approve a bill that would mandate the state Department of Health to study assisted suicide, the first step towards legalizing doctor-facilitated death. Yet doctors and even the New York Alliance Against Assisted Suicide have been protesting the assisted suicide bills in New York. Speaking before the Senate last year, these groups noted the myriad issues with allowing doctors to kill their patients.

Dr. Matthew Lynch, a neurologist, criticized the lack of safeguards in the bill, as well as the lack of training required for doctors to participate. “Just because a person is unimpaired when consenting to a script doesn't mean they won't be when they decide to take it,” he said before the Senate. “If I want to prescribe opioids in New York, I have to take a three-hour course every three years; if I want to prescribe medical marijuana, I have to take a course and register with the Health Department. But if I want to prescribe death under this bill, I don't need any specific training.”

Palliative care specialist Dr. Mary-Ellen Edmiston asked lawmakers why they aren't providing better options for sick and dying New Yorkers, and instead are simply focusing on death. “Hospice and palliative care as a medical specialty exists to help patients with life-limiting illness, experience the best quality of life possible as they face the reality of their own impending death,” she said. “There are alternatives to unwilling suffering. We hope to provide more aid in living rather than more aid in dying.”

Also criticizing the bill was Dr. Gregory Weston, an infectious disease specialist who argued that this would give insurance companies incentive to refuse payment for expensive treatments. “Doctor-assisted suicide is especially dangerous for those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, isolated, the elderly, and living with disabilities,” he said. “Those who are already marginalized and discriminated by our health care system.”

