

May 29, 2020



Dear Priests, Deacons and Pastoral Leadership,

We, the bishops of Washington state, wish to notify you of our strong support and encouragement for gathering signatures for Initiative 1698 (I-1698). I-1698 is a pro-life initiative requiring that an ultrasound be performed prior to an abortion in Washington state. The initiative outlaws the act of an abortion if a fetal heartbeat is detected. Any I-1698 parish signature efforts must receive the expressed approval of the parish pastor. Organizers look to receive signed petitions by June 24, 2020 in order to submit them to the Secretary of State in a timely manner.

I-1698 is an initiative to the people that requires an ultrasound of a fetus be performed no less than 24 hours prior to an abortion. If a heartbeat is detected, it will be unlawful for an abortion to be performed. Results of ultrasounds will be reported to the Washington State Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Exceptions will be made for cases preventing the death of a pregnant woman. Exceptions are also made for cases involving a serious risk of substantial and irreversible impairment of a major bodily function of a pregnant woman. Abortions performed under these circumstances will be documented in a pregnant woman's medical records and will be maintained by the performing physician for at least seven years. Under the initiative, terminations occurring when a pregnancy is diagnosed as medically futile are not defined as abortions.

The Washington State Catholic Conference is the common voice of the Catholic Bishops of the Archdiocese of Seattle, the Diocese of Spokane, and the Diocese of Yakima. We encourage advocacy in public policy to create a society that recognizes the dignity of every human person. We promote this signature-gathering effort in response to our call from Jesus Christ to protect and promote all human life from conception until natural death. The defense of the unborn child is an essential part of our consistent pro-life efforts, which express our love of God as necessarily manifested in our love of neighbor.

Petitions may be obtained from Carolyn Crain of the Heartbeat Committee, hazel_x2@comcast.net or 503-984-5659. If you have any questions regarding allowing signature gathering at your parish, please contact the WSCC at 206-301-0556 or wsc@WACatholics.org.

In the heart of Christ,

Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne
Archbishop of Seattle

Most Rev. Joseph J. Tyson
Bishop of Yakima

Most Rev. Thomas A. Daly
Bishop of Spokane

Most Rev. Eusebio Elizondo, M.Sp.S.
Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle

Most Rev. Daniel H. Mueggenborg
Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle