

Remarks for Press conference on special legislative session to enact a heartbeat bill, 7/9/2023, organized by Connie Ryan of Iowa Interfaith Action Alliance

Good afternoon.

I am the Right Reverend Betsey Monnot, and I am the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa. I oversee all the Episcopal churches across our state.

I am here today representing the many, many people of faith across Iowa who believe that guaranteeing access to reproductive healthcare, without the interference of legislators and lawyers, is one of the ways that God calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Jesus commanded his followers to love God and to love their neighbors. Christians believe that our neighbors are not just whoever happens to be near us, but our neighbors are anyone in need, no matter whoever and wherever they are. In the Episcopal Church, when we are baptized, we promise to respect the dignity of every human being. This is one of the ways that we try to fulfill Jesus' commandment to love our neighbor.

Christians are called to love our neighbor at the time of difficult decisions that sometimes have to be made around the termination of a pregnancy. There are so many variables in any pregnancy, and in the life of every pregnant person and their family. Women in Iowa who become pregnant should be able to make their own healthcare decisions in consultation with their doctors and, if they choose, with their own faith leaders or clergy. That is how we respect their dignity, and how we fulfill the promises that we make at our baptism.

My church, the Episcopal Church, has been in favor of abortion rights since 1967<sup>1</sup>. We are unequivocally opposed to any government legislation which would abridge or deny the right of individuals to reach informed decisions about the termination of pregnancy or that would limit . . . access . . . to safe means of acting on (that) decision.<sup>2</sup> We believe that . . .

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<sup>1</sup> [https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts\\_resolution.pl?resolution=1976-D095](https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=1976-D095)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts\\_resolution-complete.pl?resolution=1994-A054](https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution-complete.pl?resolution=1994-A054)

reproductive health and reproductive health procedures should be treated as all other medical procedures.<sup>3</sup>

The Episcopal Church supports the right of Iowa women and every person to make the best decisions regarding their own reproductive health care for themselves and for their families. We oppose attempts to enshrine religious values into secular law.

As Christians, we believe that religious freedom means that every person should have the right to practice their own religion in this country, but not to force their religion onto others. In this week's special session of the legislature, Iowa politicians plan to restrict all Iowans to following the teaching of one particular section of Christianity in the area of reproductive healthcare. This is an inappropriate use of our system of government, and it will prevent Christians like myself and those I lead from exercising our own deeply held religious convictions to respect the dignity of every human being and to love our neighbors, especially our neighbors in need of reproductive healthcare.

Thank you.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts\\_resolution.pl?resolution=2018-D032](https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2018-D032)