



# Washington State Catholic Conference

The Public Policy Voice of the Bishops of Washington State

## **ACTION ALERT: Preserve Integrity of the Family – Oppose SB 5395**

### ***Urge State House to Oppose Comprehensive Sex Education***

The State Legislature is considering SB 5395. The bill imposes a statewide standard on all K-12 public schools to teach comprehensive sex education. SB 5395 prevents locally elected school boards from self-determining their own approach in this sensitive area. While vaguely requiring school boards to consult with parents, guardians, and local communities, SB 5395 does not define any meaningful role for them in the decision-making process prior to implementation.

### **Background**

The bishops at the Second Vatican Council taught that the “family is a kind of school of deeper humanity. ... The right of parents to ... educate their children in the bosom of the family must be safeguarded.” *Gaudium et Spes*, The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, no. 52.

Moreover, the Catholic principle of subsidiarity holds that certain issues are best dealt with locally. The sensitive matter of sex education is one such example of the appropriateness of handling some governmental issues on the local level.

The Washington State Catholic Conference opposes SB 5395 for several reasons. Specifically, SB 5395:

- Prevent locally elected school boards from self-determining their own policy in this sensitive area rather than enabling them to protect the values of their community.
- Do not ensure for meaningful curricula review by parents and guardians nor provide for public comment prior to implementation.
- Lack a plan to communicate new curricula, as well as opt-out information, to the families of over 130,000 public school students who do not speak English at home.
- Fail to address adequately complex moral issues tied to human sexuality.

**Send Message to Legislators:** Please urge your two Representatives to oppose **SB 5395**. Visit the WSCC Action Center to send a message to them now:

<https://bit.ly/2tXBnNn>



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## **ACTION ALERT: Repeal Death Penalty – Support SB 5339**

*[T]he Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that “the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person” [Pope Francis], and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide. – Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2267*

*Racism and other unjust discrimination, the use of the death penalty, resorting to unjust war, the use of torture, war crimes, the failure to respond to those who are suffering from hunger ... are all serious moral issues that challenge our consciences and require us to act. - Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, 2019*

**SB 5339** eliminates the death penalty in the state of Washington and provides that all persons convicted of Aggravated First Degree Murder must be sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of release or parole. The Catholic Bishops of this state have long been on record as opposing capital punishment. St. John Paul II also opposed the death penalty, calling it “cruel and unnecessary.”

In October 2018, the Washington State Supreme Court declared the state’s death penalty law unconstitutional because it has been “imposed in an arbitrary and racially biased manner.” The Court noted that this is the fourth time Washington’s death penalty laws have been declared unconstitutional since 1972. Advocates of legislative repeal say it is time to stop trying to fix an unfixable law.

Murder and other violent crimes cry out for an appropriate punishment, but the death penalty merely adds violence to violence, and perpetuates the illusion that the taking of one human life for another can somehow balance the scales of justice. Our country’s legal system is far from perfect when it comes to imposing the death penalty. There can be significant racial bias and innocent people do end up on death row. Since 1973, 167 people sentenced to death have been exonerated. In addition, capital punishment costs the taxpayers far more than incarcerating convicted murderers for life. A 2015 study found that capital cases cost an average of more than \$1 million more than those aggravated murder cases for which the death penalty is not sought.

**Send Message to Legislators:** Please urge your two Representatives to support **SB 5339** and abolish the death penalty in Washington State. Visit the WSCC Action Center to send a message to them now:

<https://bit.ly/2OL9Fuy>