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9 April 2024

**Direction from all Four of the Colorado Catholic Bishops
to People Affiliated with the “Colorado Life Initiative”**

Attached are three separate letters from the Bishops of the Archdiocese of Denver, Diocese of Colorado Springs, and Diocese of Pueblo, requesting the people affiliated with “Colorado Life Initiative” stop making misleading statements and stop disrupting parish life, immediately. On legislative issues, including pro-life protection and stopping abortion, the Colorado Catholic Conference, as the united voice of the Bishops, is charged by all three Colorado dioceses to implement the Bishops’ instructions. All four Bishops in Colorado are united on the right approach to the pro-life cause, and they have serious concerns about the actions of an organization called the Colorado Life Initiative. The implications of the statements and actions of people affiliated with Colorado Life Initiative carry Catholic canon law and civil law issues of serious concern.

Please see the attached aligned letters:

- The Archdiocese of Denver Direct Request to those affiliated with Colorado Life Initiative
- Letter from the Diocese of Colorado Springs
- Letter from the Diocese of Pueblo

Given the four extreme abortion legislation enacted in Colorado in 2022 and 2023, the pro-life movement in Colorado is in a critical juncture. The Bishops want the Faithful to stay united and execute a prudential strategy for long-term success and preservation of human life. States such as Ohio have proven that the most well-intentioned abortion ban, when not strategically executed, can result in codification of abortion. This tragically happened in Ohio in their 2023 election, and Ohio is a state with a majority of pro-life lawmakers. Ohio taught an important lesson to everyone who fights for sanctity of life of preborn children in post-*Roe* America. Colorado’s battle is even more difficult, and therefore necessitates a united pro-life community and strategic plan.

The four Catholic Bishops in their November 2023 letter, along with a broad coalition of other organizations in the pro-life community, outlined the united effort in 2024 to defeat the “Right to Abortion” ballot initiative. This terrible legislation will make abortion a “fundamental right” in the state constitution and remove Colorado’s constitutional ban on tax-payer-funded abortion. If “Right to Abortion” is successful, then Colorado will become the most pro-abortion state in America. The Bishops’ serious concern, expressed in the attached letters, is that even if well-intentioned, the efforts of the Colorado Life Initiative and its volunteers could backfire and result in the passage of the “Right to Abortion” constitutional amendment – resulting in the deaths of millions more Colorado children.

As a member of the first-ever large Colorado coalition for pro-life efforts, [Pro-Life Colorado](#), and at the express direction of all four Bishops, the Catholic Conference asks the people affiliated with Colorado Life Initiative to unite with us, not divide us. The Bishops’ expectations and directions are clear.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brittany Vessely".

Brittany Vessely
Executive Director, Colorado Catholic Conference

8 April 2024

The Archdiocese of Denver
Direct Request to those affiliated with Colorado Life Initiative

Dear people affiliated with the “Colorado Life Initiative”:

As the leaders of the Faithful in Northern Colorado, we write to express our serious concerns regarding the tactics employed by the “Colorado Life Initiative” in seeking support for a 2024 ballot measure related to abortion.

It must be made clear at the outset that there should be no doubt by the Faithful or by anyone in the broader secular community of Colorado about all three Colorado Dioceses’ commitment to life. We affirm that the sanctity of life is the preeminent issue for Catholics, especially concerning lives of preborn children, and we will continue to advocate against abortion and for life-affirming policies through our Catholic Conference, the entity that executes all our legislative directives.

The first issue of serious concern is your group suggesting that the Church in Colorado, the Colorado Bishops and the Catholic Conference are not supportive of life, or are somehow not fully committed to this issue. This is false and needs to stop immediately. Compounding the problems created by these falsehoods is the fact that at the same time you are attacking the Colorado Bishops and Catholic Conference, you are going to Catholic parishes and asking parishioners to defy the Colorado Bishops’ requests to all Catholics not to participate in your signature collection efforts. What this means is that this is not about the politics of abortion, but your efforts to use false statements to try to have faithful Catholics ignore or defy the rightful representatives of the Church.

As all four Colorado Catholic bishops outlined in our November 13, 2023 open letter, [it](#) is apparent to us and our well-informed advisors that the Colorado Life Initiative effort will not be successful in its objectives. The necessary groundwork has not been laid for success and it will likely harm the pro-life efforts in Colorado. For instance, the media and pro-abortion lobby are currently using the Colorado Life Initiative “Protections for a Living Child” ballot measure to drive more voters *to support the “Right to Abortion”* ballot initiative. If the “Right to Abortion” initiative is successful, then Colorado will become the number one abortion destination in the United States. We must stand united against this terrible drive to expand abortion, and the Colorado Life Initiative is fracturing the Faithful and hurting the work on this critical issue. We know that it is easy to reference God’s will and tie that to one’s cause, but God charges us with using judgment, discernment, and prayer to guide our actions. The Colorado Catholic Bishops have done all of these things, and all four Bishops are aligned that continuing to collect signatures at the Catholic parishes is not the right course of action for our Church. To put this differently, while you may disagree with the Bishops’ decision on this issue, it does not justify the clear instances in which false and misleading statements have been made regarding the Bishops’ letter and their work to fully protect life.

The second issue of serious concern is the manner in which the Colorado Life Initiative’s efforts have unfolded within our parishes. We have received many complaints by parishioners and pastors that people affiliated with your group have disturbed the peace and sanctity of our church spaces in a manner that is disruptive to the spirit of our liturgies, and not conducive to a culture of life or Christian charity. These efforts need to cease immediately, and the Archdiocese of Denver is prepared to use Church law and civil law to ensure parish life is not disrupted in contravention to our direct requests to you. While some in your group may think this is all good

intentioned or warranted by your view of how to manage this cause, you should know these justifications are not credited in the civil law where trespassing, nuisance, slander and other offenses are not excused because of one's political agenda and approach to political issues.

Catholic parishes across Northern Colorado and parish leadership, copied on this letter, may request that any representatives of the Colorado Life Initiative leave parish premises should their activities disrupt parish peace or operations, and you are required to honor those lawful requests. The Archdiocese is committed to using every lawful means to preserve the peaceful ministry occurring in our parishes, and equally committed to rectify falsehoods.

This request does not diminish our shared commitment to the pro-life cause; rather, it seeks to ensure that our efforts to protect and cherish life are conducted with respect, peace, and in a manner befitting our shared faith and values. Colorado needs a large-scale education and political campaign to successfully pass a pro-life proposal. Pro-Life Colorado is the united coalition of over 50 pro-life organizations in Colorado working strategically and prudently on an education and political campaign. We encourage you to work with them, not work in isolation and disagreement with others who also want to fully protect life. Even if your approach is what you believe to be a well-intentioned effort—your approach is hurting the Church's and other organizations' work on this life-and-death issue and negatively impacting parish life.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Archbishop Aquila



Bishop Rodriguez



Diocese of Colorado Springs

Office of the Bishop
228 North Cascade Avenue
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80903

Telephone (719) 636-2345 • FAX (719) 866-6488

8 April 2024

Dear Colorado Life Initiative:

It has come to my attention that individuals affiliated with your organization may have made inaccurate and scandalous statements to pastors and parishioners in the Diocese of Colorado Springs. These statements relate to the Colorado Bishops' November 13, 2023, memo regarding ballot initiatives and signature collecting at Catholic parishes.

All the Bishops of Colorado, together with Archbishop Aquila, affirm the sanctity of life as the most important issue for Catholics. As you may know, here in Colorado Springs, we just opened a house for unwed mothers to live rent-free before and after the birth of their children. In the legislative arena, the Colorado Bishops act primarily through the Colorado Catholic Conference (CCC), which organizes and executes our legislative efforts.

To suggest that the CCC or the Bishops themselves do not support the precious rights of the unborn is false, misleading, and causing scandal in my Diocese. Pursuant to Canons 220, 1373, and 1390, §2 of the Code of Canon Law, these actions must cease immediately.

In addition, it has come to my attention that individuals affiliated with your organization may have intentionally or unintentionally disrupted sacred liturgies and approached parishioners entering or leaving sacred spaces without the permission of the Church Pastors. Pursuant to Canons 1392, §§1-2 and Canon 1372, §1, these actions must also cease immediately.

In addition to the Canons referenced above, I also share my brother Bishops' concerns about civil law violations that may be occurring, and I am in alignment with them that we must protect our parishes and preserve the truth in all situations.

I recognize that emotions can run high on issues involving the lives of the unborn, and that reasonable Christians can have differences of opinion regarding strategies and tactics in legislative matters. However, in unity with the CCC and my brother Bishops, I firmly stand behind the statement we made last November.

Finally, moving forward I believe that the Church needs to educate Catholics and all people of goodwill to successfully pass pro-life proposals. Pro-Life Colorado is a united coalition of over 50 pro-life organizations in Colorado made up of people from many different faiths and led by the CCC to work strategically and prudently on education and political campaigns. I encourage you to work with them.

If you would like to schedule a meeting with me to discuss these issues, please contact my Chief of Staff, Deacon Rob Rysavy, at (719) 866-6447 or by email at rrysavy@diocs.org. Please know of my respect for your zeal to protect the unborn. Although we disagree on strategies and tactics, I believe we are called by Christ to seek humility, charity, and unity on these critical issues.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ James R. Golka

Most Reverend James R. Golka
Bishop of Colorado Springs



DIOCESE OF PUEBLO
C O L O R A D O

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

8 April 2024

Dear Colorado Life Initiative:

As you were informed by the Colorado Bishops' memo, 3 November 2023, the four bishops of Colorado requested their parishes to refrain from collecting signatures for the ballot initiative, #81, "Protection for a Living Child" at our Catholic parishes. The reasons for this request were comprehensively and respectfully given, according to our desire to maintain a united front in our Cause for Life.

However, throughout the Lenten season, parishioners have been subjected to distraction, disruption of the spirit of the liturgy, approached by CLI members in sacred spaces without knowledge of the pastor, papering windshields with leaflets for parishioners to find after Mass, and the CLI spread of rumors against the Colorado Catholic Conference's, and even the Colorado Bishops' support for the Pro-Life cause. This is causing public scandal and division in the local church. I must now request that you cease these activities.

As you may be aware, the Diocese of Pueblo partners with 12 pregnancy care/resource centers located across southern Colorado and the western slope, supported by the Knights of Columbus. We have worked to build a coalition through them and other non-Catholic entities, in support of the legislative agenda of the CCC and the Bishops of Colorado. We are also allied with Pro-Life Colorado, an ecumenical coalition of over 50 pro-life organizations which assist the creation of united strategies, tactics, and educational campaigns. All of which promote the dignity and sanctity of life, in alignment with the goals and strategies of the CCC.

This Easter Season reminds all the people of God of our call to see the resurrected Christ in every human being, and to protect the dignity and sanctity of all life. Please be assured that the Bishops, the CCC, and the Pastors fully support and work to restore that dignity and sanctity. I pray earnestly to the Holy Spirit that your and our methodology towards the Pro-Life cause be healed, unified, and, finally, successful.

If you would like to schedule a meeting with me to discuss these issues, please contact my Chancellor and Director of Operations, Ms. Joe'l DeYoung at (719) 544-9861 Ext.1112 or by email at jdeyoung@dioceseofpueblo.org.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Stephen J. Berg
Bishop of Pueblo