

Colorado Catholic Conference opposed sex education proposal HB 1292

By John Gleason, Denver Catholic Register
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE OF CATHOLIC LIFE

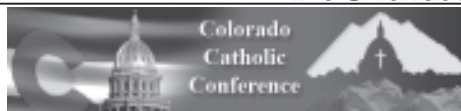
DENVER - A bill pertaining to the teaching of sex education in public schools now making its way through the Colorado Legislature has raised the concern of the Colorado Catholic Conference, the state level, public policy arm of the Church in Colorado.

House Bill 1292, which would significantly alter the way sex education is taught in schools, has been vigorously opposed by the conference.

Sponsored by Rep. Nancy Todd, D-Aurora, HB 1292 calls for the adoption of science-based content standards for instruction regarding human sexuality. The Colorado Catholic Conference is concerned with the bill's effect on federal abstinence-education funding. Pleased that the proposal does address the need for abstinence education, the conference fears the bill could preclude groups that go into public schools to teach it.

"Some groups that receive Title V funding would not be able to go in and teach their abstinence program," Jennifer Kraska, deputy director for government affairs for the conference said. "The law would require that students be taught about the effective use of condoms and health benefits of birth control."

Planned Parenthood had a lot of input in the draft-



ing of the bill and stands to gain a great deal if it becomes law, Kraska said.

"If it passes," she said, "it could effectively ban abstinence-only education in public schools."

On Feb. 27, HB 1292 passed the House Committee on Education by a vote of 9-4 and was sent on to the Senate Education Committee. Kraska said there was no word as to how Gov. Bill Ritter would act on the matter, should the bill reach his desk.

Two other proposals opposed by the conference, House Bill 1300, which would have eliminated the need for students to have written parental consent to attend sex education classes, and Senate Bill 80, which would have mandated that girls 12 and older either be vaccinated against the Human Papilloma Virus that causes cervical cancer or indicate they declined the vaccine, are dead, thanks in part to the response from people who opposed them, said Kraska.

"Efforts pay off," she said. "Making your position known is a good thing. People responded to action alerts and contacted their legislators. The lawmakers realize that this is an important issue to their constituents and they take the process seriously." †

The Colorado Catholic Conference urges Catholics to make their voices heard by calling their representative and asking them to vote against HB 1292.

DREAM Act means hope for students

By John Gleason, Denver Catholic Register
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DENVER - What's in a DREAM?

Well, if it stands for Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors, it could mean the difference between having a college education or not.

The DREAM Act, which would provide a path for legal residence and educational opportunities for young people who were brought to the United States as undocumented immigrant children, is part of an upcoming comprehensive immigration reform bill soon to be introduced in congress.

Statistics from Council La Raza show that as many as 600,000 students per year would be eligible under the DREAM Act; a number that Mateos Alvarez, community organizer for Metro Organizations for People, believes could be higher. The DREAM Act would give these young people a hand up, not a hand out, Alvarez said.

"Students who meet certain criteria to be able to apply to college at in-state tuition and apply for a temporary visa," he explained. "It doesn't mean they automatically get financial aid. If accepted, the student would pay out of their own pocket, or apply from private resources (grants and scholarships) just like everyone else."

Major benefits of the program would be long-term resident students being allowed to work and otherwise fully participate in their communities, and colleges would be able to make their own decisions about providing in-state tuition for immigrant students instead of being restricted by federal law. The DREAM Act has some heavy support in Washington, D.C., too.

"Even Senator Orrin Hatch, who favors more enforcement on the border, is in support," Alvarez said. "We're talking about young people who've been in the United States for most of their lives. Many were brought to this country as infants by their parents and now they just want to become model citizens."

One of the thousands of young people who could benefit from the DREAM Act is 17-year-old Teresa Chavira. A senior at Westminster High School, Chavira was born in Mexico and brought to the United States when she was just 6 months old. Her goal is to become a dentist and the DREAM Act could help that happen.

"It's would be a great benefit," she said. "It would allow me to continue my education and fulfill my dream. Then I could return and give back to my community. Right now, a lot of my friends can't afford to continue their education when they graduate high school. The DREAM Act would change a lot of lives."

Chavira was one of many who made a case for the DREAM Act at a public meeting held in downtown Denver's St. Joseph Parish gym on March 13. At the meeting, MOP in conjunction with Congregations and Schools Empowered, discussed the legislation and took public testimony as to the importance of the act and

what it would mean to the lives of many.

"This is an important issue for many children," said Luis Soto, director for Hispanic Ministry for the Denver Archdiocese, "Without it, many would never be able to continue school."

MOP leaders traveled to Washington, D.C., to talk with other members of the Colorado congressional delegation. Just when the bill will be introduced in congress is anybody's guess, said Alvarez.

More information on the DREAM Act can be found at the MOP Web site, www.mopdenver.org, or by calling 303-399-2425.

DREAM Act Overview

What is it for? To provide an path for legal residence and educational opportunities for young people who were brought to the United States as undocumented immigrant children and have grown up in the US, graduated from high school and stayed out of trouble.

What are the requirements to qualify?

1. The student must have been in the United States for more than five years.
2. The student must have been 15 years old or younger when he or she arrived in the United States.
3. The student must have good moral character.

What is the process?

1. When an eligible student graduates from high school, he or she would apply for conditional status, which gives up to six years of legal residence.
2. During those six years, the student would have to do one of three things ■ graduate from a 2-year college degree program ■ complete 2 years of a 4-year college degree program ■ serve in the U.S. military for 2 years
3. Permanent residence would be granted after 6 years if the student has met the requirements and has continued to have good moral character.

What are the benefits? ■ Long-term resident students will be given the opportunity to apply for legal residency, allowing them to work and otherwise fully participate in their communities. ■ Colleges would be able make their own decisions about providing in-state tuition for immigrant students instead of being restricted by federal law. ■ Increased levels of higher education would have benefits for local and state economies. †

SEE GRAND JUNCTION SPANISH DREAM STORY ON PAGE 13.



Elizabeth Mariscal, a ninth-grade student prays with supporters of the Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors Act, known as the DREAM Act, during a community forum. The measure would create a way for students who were brought illegally to the United States by their parents to legalize their own status while getting a college education at in-state resident rates. CNS photo

BISHOPS' STATEMENT

House Bill 1330 seeks to circumvent the expressed will of Colorado voters

March 21, 2007

House Bill 1330 would allow the live-in same-sex or heterosexual partner of a single legal parent to become the second legal parent of a child. Without the customary legal review process required in ordinary adoptions. In effect, this arrangement of joint legal parenthood creates the appearance of a family, yet without the stability of traditional marriage. Thus, House Bill 1330 will indirectly weaken our normative understanding of family and marriage—which is life-long love of one man and one woman for the benefit of children and the unity of the spouses. This classic definition of marriage is truly what is in the best interests of a child.

Furthermore, Colorado voters reaffirmed this notion of marriage and family, in November 2006 when they approved Amendment 43 by a strong majority. Voters also clearly rejected Referendum I, which would have allowed same-sex domestic partnerships to be a parallel legal Structure to traditional marriage and would have afforded same-sex couples the possibility of adopting children. In November, Coloradans stood firm on the traditional notion of marriage and family.

House Bill 1330 seeks to circumvent the clearly expressed will of Colorado voters by indirectly changing what the State of Colorado means by the words 'family and marriage.'

Our elected officials have a very serious duty to support the Institutions of marriage and the family. The family is the foundation of every society; protecting it is a matter of social health and survival. Political authority, because it exists at the service of the people, must also be at the service of the family.

We urge Catholics across Colorado to immediately review and consider this proposed legislation, and make their opinions known to their lawmakers.

+Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.E.M. Cap.
Archbishop of Denver

+*Richard M. Doerflinger*
+Most Reverend Arthur N. Taffoy, D.D.
Bishop of Pueblo

+*Richard J. Schickel*
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The Sisters of St. Joseph
wish you new life and peace
at this Easter season as we become
the Congregation of St. Joseph.

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