

CATHOLICS  
FOR  
CHOICE

July 31, 2010

IN GOOD CONSCIENCE

**Dear Planned Parenthood of the Heartland staff:**

I am extremely sad to see reports that Archbishop George Lucas has announced plans to lead a protest at the site of your new clinic in Omaha. I write to you today, as a Catholic and as the president of Catholics for Choice, in solidarity with the women and men who work at the clinic providing reproductive healthcare services for the women of Nebraska and Iowa, to tell you we think the archbishop is wrong.

As Catholics, we believe that individual conscience in matters of moral decision-making is at the core of our tradition. We cannot presume to tell others how best to inform and to listen to their own consciences. Clinics such as yours serve vital roles within the community and attempts to impede access through intimidation are unconscionable.

Archbishop Lucas, who is leading the protest, is one of the 258 active Catholic bishops in the United States. Like other bishops who have been outspoken against abortion, he is in a tiny minority of Americans and of Catholics who oppose abortion in all circumstances.

According to our polling fewer than 15 percent of Catholics in America agree with the bishops that all abortion should be banned. The rest of the 65 million American Catholics can see circumstances in which legal abortion is an acceptable, even essential, aspect of healthcare.

However, it is not just our polling that shows this. When the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops conducted their own polling, they found that barely a tenth of Americans agree with Archbishop Lucas and his fellow bishops who think abortion should never be available for women who need it. This figure is one of the lowest found in a large-scale poll in recent years.

The majority of Planned Parenthood's services are aimed at preventing unintended pregnancies. The new Omaha clinic will help to reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies and support women and men who want to have children. We recognize the vital importance of the services that you provide, services that for so many women, especially low-income women, geographically isolated women, young women, and women of color, are difficult to access. We share your conviction that while we must do all we can to help women prevent unplanned pregnancies we will not abandon women who need abortions.

Thank you for providing continued access to the complete range of reproductive healthcare services—even in the face of ongoing protests and threats. Your work is critically important to the women of Nebraska and Iowa. This commitment to community and to those who need help most is the model of social justice that we at Catholics for Choice work to support. Please know that you have our unwavering support and greatest esteem. You are not alone.

Sincerely,

  
Jon O'Brien  
President