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A Carmelite Sister comforts a resident Aug. 21, 2026, at St. Patrick's Residence in Naperville, Ill. (OSV News/Courtesy Becket)

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A federal judge on Sept. 11 temporarily blocked Illinois from enforcing the state's physician-assisted suicide law, which permits physicians to aid terminally ill adults in dying by suicide, against Catholic entities that challenged it in court.

The judge granted a temporary restraining order to Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago, two orders of Catholic women religious and an Illinois pharmacist in response to their lawsuit, [Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm v. Prince](#), filed earlier in September. The Catholic entities have argued [the law](#), which took effect Sept. 12, would require them to facilitate such deaths for their patients in violation of their faith.

"I welcome this decision of the court that stays the enforcement of the provisions of the Illinois End-of-Life Options for Terminally Ill Patients Act (EOLOA) that require healthcare providers, against their conscience, to participate in assisted suicide by

compelling them to inform patients of the 'benefits' of suicide and their 'right' to kill themselves, and also help them qualify for lethal drugs, or pass them along to someone willing to help them obtain those drugs," Cupich said in a statement. "These obligations violate core constitutional protections of freedom of speech and religion. The law with these provisions must be struck down permanently."

"To be clear, the Church's objection to this statute is not an attempt to impose Catholic teaching on non-Catholics; it is an effort to stop the State from compelling Catholic health care providers to violate their conscience," he continued.

Supporters of legalizing physician-assisted suicide argue the practice offers autonomy to suffering or terminally ill individuals in their final days, but opponents argue such laws disregard the dignity of human life and leave those who are ill or dying vulnerable to coercion, among other concerns.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church specifically condemns the practice of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide as "morally unacceptable" and a violation of the Fifth Commandment, "You shall not kill."

In a statement issued Dec. 12 when he signed the law, Gov. JB Pritzker, D-Ill., argued the practice offers "freedom and choice at the end of life in the midst of personal heartbreak."

In a Sept. 11 statement, Mother Mary Rose Heery, prioress general of the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm, said, "This agreement brings real peace of mind to our Sisters, our residents, and their families."

"It allows us to continue our vocation of showing Christ's unbounded love to those who need it most — a love that endures in every circumstance and through every hardship," she said. "We're grateful that nothing about the care we offer them will have to change."

Mark Rienzi, president of Becket and lead attorney for the healthcare providers, said in a statement, "It's hard to imagine a more blatant attack on religious freedom than forcing Catholic nuns to help people commit suicide. Illinois was right to agree to the court's order."

"We look forward to ending this mandate for good and protecting the right of patients to spend their final days with those who will offer them compassionate, life-

affirming care," he continued.

Specific "Catholic health care entities" under the authority of Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield, four Catholic doctors and Lutheran Care Center, a nursing home in south-central Illinois, were also previously shielded from the Illinois law in response to a separate lawsuit.

A federal judge in July also temporarily shielded four orders of women religious and Catholic healthcare ministries from enforcement of a similar New York state law allowing physicians to aid terminally ill adults in dying by suicide.

The Catholic entities in the Empire State — the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm, the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne, the Missionary Sisters of St. Benedict and the Little Sisters of the Poor — [sued over New York's assisted suicide law](#), similarly arguing it would require them to facilitate deaths by assisted suicide for their patients in violation of their faith.

[Kate Scanlon is a national reporter for OSV News covering Washington. Follow her on X @kgscanlon.]

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