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Catholic church gives D.C. ultimatum

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NCR Today

Writing at the On Faith blog at the Washington Post, Tim Craig and Michelle Boorstein report:

The Catholic Archdiocese of Washington said Wednesday that it will be unable to continue the social service programs it runs for the District if the city doesn't change a proposed same-sex marriage law, a threat that could affect tens of thousands of people the church helps with adoption, homelessness and health care.

Under the bill, headed for a D.C. Council vote next month, religious organizations would not be required to perform or make space available for same-sex weddings. But they would have to obey city laws prohibiting discrimination against gay men and lesbians.

Fearful that they could be forced, among other things, to extend employee benefits to same-sex married couples, church officials said they would have no choice but to abandon their contracts with the city.

"If the city requires this, we can't do it," Susan Gibbs, spokeswoman for the archdiocese, said Wednesday. "The city is saying in order to provide social services, you need to be secular. For us, that's really a problem."

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