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New York bishops oppose effort to 'codify' Roe v. Wade into state law

by Catholic News Service

Albany, N.Y. — New York's bishops, led by Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, said they would oppose a portion of New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Women's Equality Act that preserves abortion rights.

The bill, introduced Tuesday, "would ease restrictions in state law on late-term abortion and runs the serious risk of broadly expanding abortion access at all stages of gestation," the bishops said in a statement Tuesday.

"While the bill's proponents say it will simply 'codify' federal law, it is selective in its codification," they added, "Nowhere does it address the portions of federal laws that limit abortion, such as the ban on taxpayer funding, the ban on partial-birth abortion or protections for unborn victims of violence."

The bishops said, "We fully oppose this measure, and urge all our faithful people to do the same, vigorously and unapologetically."

The Women's Equality Act is a 10-point program unveiled by Cuomo, a Democrat and a Catholic.

Those points, according to the governor's website, are: achieving pay equity; stopping sexual harassment in the workplace; allowing for the recovery of attorneys' fees in employment and credit and lending cases; strengthening human trafficking laws; ending family status discrimination; stopping source-of-income discrimination; stopping housing discrimination for victims of domestic violence; stopping pregnancy discrimination; protecting victims of domestic violence by strengthening order-of-protection laws; and protecting "a woman's freedom of choice."

"We support the first nine points in the governor's agenda that enhance the true dignity of women," the bishops said. "We commit ourselves to examining those proposals and working with the legislature on any and all efforts that help guarantee real equity for all women and men. Our position on these issues will be consistent with all the efforts of the Catholic Church throughout the world to enhance the dignity of women."

But, the bishops added, "the direct taking of the life of a child in the womb in no way enhances a woman's dignity."

The bishops said, "Instead of expanding abortion and making abortions even more prevalent, we would like to protect both the woman and the child in the womb. In New York, where one in every three pregnancies ends in abortion -- and upwards of six in 10 in certain communities -- it is clear that we as a state have lost sight of that child's dignity."

A analysis of the bill by David Masci, a senior researcher for Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, said Americans continue to be of two minds on abortion.

A January Pew Forum poll showed Americans, by better than a 2-to-1 margin, did not want *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, to be overturned.

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In the survey, 63 percent said they did not want *Roe v. Wade* struck down, while 29 percent said it should be completely overturned. In response to another question, though, 47 percent of American adults said it was morally wrong to have an abortion, compared to 27 percent who said abortion is not a moral issue, 13 who view abortion as morally acceptable, and 9 percent who said the morality of abortion depends on the situation.

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