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PRESS RELEASE

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Catholic Medical Association and National Catholic Bioethics Center Announce Disappointment with the American Medical Association's Decision Not to Endorse Their Council's Recommendation to Continue Opposing Legalized Physician-Assisted Suicide

(PHILADELPHIA, PA)— June 12, 2018 The Catholic Medical Association (CMA) in concert with the National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC) announced disappointment in the decision by the American Medical Association's (AMA) House of Delegates who voted to reject their own Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs' (CEJA) report recommending the AMA retain its long-held opposition to physician-assisted suicide. The vote at the group's annual meeting in Chicago not to accept the report but to send it back for review was narrow. 56% of delegates voted against the long-standing position against physician assisted suicide.

Currently, the AMA's opinion states, "Permitting physicians to engage in assisted suicide would ultimately cause more harm than good."

"For more than two decades the nation's most prominent and largest association of physicians vocally opposed physician-assisted suicide," said CMA President Peter T. Morrow, MD. "Monday's AMA's House of Delegates vote refusing their council's recommendation to continue opposing physician-assisted suicide is hugely disappointing and frankly disturbing."

The AMA has a membership of some 240,000 members. Several CMA members who also belong to the AMA testified before the House of Delegates prior to the vote. Other CMA members submitted on-line comments renouncing the assisted suicide practice.

"Of course, we would have preferred that they accept the recommendation of their CEJA committee's report recommending the AMA maintain its objection to physician-assisted suicide," said NCBC Dir. of Bioethics & Public Policy Marie T. Hilliard, Ph.D., R.N. "But the good news is the AMA did not change their position. They're going to study their council's recommendation for another year. It means we continue to work."

Legislatures in seven states and Washington, D.C. have legalized physician-assisted suicide. Although only individual states can legislatively approve the practice, the AMA's position is historically influential in passing or opposing such laws.

"Since its inception in 1847 the AMA's code of ethics has always looked at the physicians' role as healer and physician assisted suicide is fundamentally incompatible with that role," Morrow said.

The CEJA's report also contained concerns that physician-assisted-suicide may eventually be used not only for consenting terminally ill adults but also for those suffering with psychiatric disorders as is legal in the Netherlands and Belgium.

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The Catholic Medical Association is a national, physician-led community of nearly 2,500 healthcare professionals consisting of 103 local guilds. CMA mission is to inform, organize, and inspire its members in steadfast fidelity to the teachings of the Catholic Church, to uphold the principles of the Catholic faith in the science and practice of medicine.

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