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March 3, 2016

Senator Michael O'Donnell
Chairman
Committee on Public Health and Welfare
Kansas Senate
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: SB 437

Chairman O'Donnell and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding a hearing on SB 437, also known as "Simon's Law." This legislation raises important questions of parental rights and end-of-life decision making, sensitive issues that need to be considered carefully.

We are extremely disturbed by the testimony of parents who report that Do Not Resuscitate orders (DNRs) were placed in the medical charts of their special needs children without their knowledge or consent. Health care decisions, especially those involving end-of-life decision making, should be made through a consultative process between parent and physician. Parents must never be excluded from decisions over their children's health care.

The intrinsic human dignity of each and every child should always be upheld. It is extraordinarily troubling that physicians may have allowed morally distorted judgments about the quality of life of profoundly ill children to interfere with their ethical obligation to their patients and their patients' parents.

We encourage the Legislature to look closely at the scenarios described by proponents and to act carefully as remedies are considered, keeping in mind the potential for unintended consequences. We look forward to offering our assistance, drawing upon the long tradition of Catholic moral teaching on care for the sick and dying.

Thank you.

Michael Schuttloffel
Executive Director

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