

Pro-life Basics

Recently I've seen news reports about bills that would require death certificates for those babies killed by abortion. Are such efforts a legitimate pro-life tactic?

—Cynthia

Dear Cynthia,

First, I would like to share with you something that Dr. Anthony Dardano wrote to me last year on my EWTN forum:

Two of the states where I am licensed to practice medicine require a fetal death certificate for all fetal losses. This includes spontaneous natural miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy and induced abortions, regardless of gestational age. Simply put, if a death certificate is required, life must have preceded it. The death certificate also requires a "cause of death" to be entered. For spontaneous miscarriage, it's "natural causes," a disease process or cause unknown. For induced abortion, the cause is listed as "voluntary interruption of pregnancy."

To this I would add that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control tracks fetal death in cases of miscarriage and even has a standard form, which can be found on the CDC web site, for reporting fetal death. The reporting procedures vary from state to state, but

the CDC notes that most states "require reporting fetal deaths of gestations of 20 weeks or more; some require reporting of all periods of gestation." However, the CDC tracks abortions separately from natural miscarriages.

Thus, requiring fetal death certificates for all pre-born children who do not survive to be born can be a valid incremental step for pro-lifers. It erases the common distinction in medical record keeping which considers only wanted babies to be worthy of death certificates. Also, it helps restore personhood to the pre-

born by recognizing their deaths. Most importantly, it need not implicitly endorse legal abortion through a "jump through these hoops and then you can have an abortion" approach. All the law need say is that the death of every preborn human being should be recorded with a death certificate.

Treating all dead babies equally is a valid step toward treating all babies, born and preborn, with equal respect for their right to life.

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