February 28, 2022

Senate Bill 2643

Mississippi House of Representatives
Philip Gunn, Speaker of the House
Mississippi State Capitol – Room 306
P. O. Box 1018
Jackson, MS 39215

Dear Speaker Gunn:

We, the undersigned, are the Catholic Bishops of the Dioceses of Jackson and Biloxi that encompass the state of Mississippi in its entirety. We are writing in unison to express our concern over Senate Bill 2643, specifically its 13th addition that in effect is opening the door to a process of unilateral divorce that is subject to abuse on many fronts.

For the past 50 years the State of Mississippi rightly has codified the compelling grounds that protect the rights of the injured party in a marriage to petition for divorce. Desertion, chronic drug and/or alcohol abuse, spousal domestic abuse, intellectual disability and mental illness do erode and can devastate the bond of marriage. The rights and wellbeing of the injured spouse and family members must be upheld in such cases. With regard to mental illness this current bill painstakingly addresses the safeguards that must be in place in order to determine beyond a reasonable doubt that the mental illness undermines one’s capacity for marriage. These precautions are prudent and just and well-grounded in jurisprudence that surrounds marriage with the presumption of permanence.

On the contrary, the insertion of the 13th cause at the end of the bill is troublesome because it takes another path, and opens the door for unilateral divorce. As written, it is lacking in any of the intrinsic safeguards that are so evident in the 12th cause on mental illness. Aside from the compelling reasons noted above that can justify divorce, the 13th cause appears to be going down a slippery slope that could erode the institution of marriage and thus undermine the common good of society.

We hope that this bill is voted down in its current form. We thank you for your consideration over this critical matter.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Joseph R. Kopacz
Bishop of Jackson

Louis F. Kihneman, III
Bishop of Biloxi

cc: Lieutenant Governor Delbert Hosemann, State of Mississippi