



## *Statement on Assembly Bill 499*

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Archbishop of Los Angeles*

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I am praying that Governor Brown will veto A.B. 499, which passed the California Senate last week.

Parents have a fundamental right and duty to be responsible for their children's physical and spiritual well-being. Children have a fundamental right to the guidance and protection of their parents.

This legislation would deny those rights.

A.B. 499 would allow children as young as 12 years old to decide by themselves — without their parents' involvement — to get vaccines to prevent sexually transmitted diseases.

Our children need the knowledge and wisdom of their parents in order to make complicated medical decisions. This legislation would leave our children to make these decisions without the benefit of their parents' wisdom.

That does not seem to be prudent public policy. Without allowing parents to be involved, there is no way we can ensure that our children will not be pressured by parties who may not have their best interests in mind, and may in fact have financial or other motivations to encourage our children to seek these vaccinations.

Also, the legislature has not shown any need for a new state-funded program to vaccinate California's pre-teens against sexually transmitted diseases. At a time when our state has serious fiscal problems, such a use of taxpayer dollars seems ill-advised.

I urge Catholics in Los Angeles to join with the Catholic bishops of our state and the California Catholic Conference in asking Governor Brown to veto this legislation. Let us all pray and work to build a society that encourages family values and strengthens the bonds of parents and children.

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