



CATHOLIC DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAS

California State Court

Unity and Charity



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Dear Worthy Regent, Officers and Members:

The following message was sent by Maureen Laubacher, Legislation State Chairman:

SB397 (Jones, R-San Diego) would amend the California Emergency Services Act to declare religious services as “essential” and prevent state or local governments from interfering in the free exercise of religion. The legislation is a reaction to the frustration many California residents have expressed at their inability to attend Mass or other church services in an unrestricted manner during the Coronavirus pandemic.

While attractive on some levels, the bishops and leaders of other denominations are taking no position on the bill. This is because they do not recognize that governments have the right to regulate religious services. If the state has the ability to declare religious services essential, the thinking goes, they also have the right to declare religious services as non-essential.

The bishops cooperated with public health authorities to regulate attendance at church services during the pandemic because of the need to protect life, the reality of valid public health concerns and our belief that the common good would be best served by protecting people from the COVID-19 virus. For the same reason, we will not be supporting legislation that sounds appealing, but creates problems in the long-term by supporting the right of the State to regulate religious practices. We agree with the recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court that affirms our right to worship and makes clear that the state may not infringe on that right and does not have any authority to regulate worship.

Please notify your representative that you oppose this bill. The Supreme Court decision will protect our right to worship.

In Unity and Charity,
Mary Bernard
California CDA State Regent



Left to right:

Maria Santos-Silva, State Secretary, Tess Chiampas, 1st Vice State Regent, Mary Bernard, State Regent, Mary Beasley, 2nd Vice State Regent, Jo Bryant, State Treasurer .