



South Dakota Catholic Conference

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May 27, 2020

The Honorable Kristi L. Noem, Governor of South Dakota
Office of the Governor
500 E. Capitol Dr.
Pierre, SD 57501

RE: Coronavirus Vaccine Research and Aborted Fetal Tissue

Dear Governor Noem:

The Catholic Church is firmly committed to the sanctity of life, beginning at conception. We thank and commend you for your strong and consistent commitment to this same principle. It is with this shared value in mind that I write, to draw your attention to morally-problematic coronavirus vaccine research and to encourage you to take strong action in defense of the dignity of the unborn.

It has been reported that there are many, perhaps dozens of, pharmaceutical companies engaged in research for a vaccine for the novel coronavirus. These companies include Amgen, Adaptive Biotechnologies Corp., BioNTech SE, Pfizer, CalciMedica Inc., CytoDyn Inc., Dynavax Technologies Corp., Gilead Sciences, GlaxoSmithKline, Heat Biologics Inc., Inovio Pharmaceutical Inc., Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, Novavax, Regneron Pharmaceuticals Inc., Sanofi, Roche Holdings AG, Translate Bio Inc., Takeda Pharmaceutical Company Ltd., Vaxart Inc., and Vir Biotechnology Inc.

At least a few of these companies are performing research using cell lines originating in aborted fetuses. For example, this includes Moderna's mRNA-1273, using Spike S protein derived from aborted fetal cells, and Johnson & Johnson (Janssen Pharmaceuticals), using PER C6 Ad5 technology, derived from aborted fetal retinal tissue. Recently, Moderna's research has regrettably drawn positive attention from many in the media and Wall Street investors.

A pharmaceutical company's choice to use abortion-derived cell lines is wholly unnecessary and deserves scrutiny from pro-life political leaders. Other companies, such as Sanofi Pasteur, Novavax, and John Paul II Medical Research Institute, are using untainted cells in their research. These companies deserve public commendation and support.

To be clear, the Catholic Church supports the swift development of coronavirus vaccines that are safe, effective, and available to all. As has been shown repeatedly, effective research leading to medical breakthroughs can be conducted without wanton disregard for the sacred dignity of the unborn. In seeking the common good, society has a moral duty to support the development of vaccines and medical therapies using cells that have not been derived from abortions. The Church acknowledges grave reasons may morally justify the use of such vaccines if no alternatives exist, but in the current stage of coronavirus vaccine research and development, every person has the duty to advocate for the development of morally sound vaccines. This duty is greater for those who have a greater voice.

For this reason, during this time of intensely-focused vaccine research, the South Dakota Catholic Conference respectfully urges you to express your support for the development of morally-sound coronavirus vaccines, to take steps to ensure such a vaccine will be available to South Dakotans, and to direct that no taxpayer funds be spent on abortion-connected coronavirus vaccines. Without strong pro-life voices in the ranks of our political leadership, pharmaceutical companies will have little incentive to improve the ethical standards of vaccine research.

Thank you for making clear to vaccine researchers that South Dakota stands for life, and for your leadership in this challenging time.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christopher J. Motz". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Christopher J. Motz, Esq.
Executive Director

cc: Sen. Brock Greenfield, President Pro Tempore
Rep. Steve Haugaard, Speaker of the House