

# Michigan prolife group ends petition effort to ban D&E abortions

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CNA Staff, Jul 22, 2020 / 02:19 pm MT ([CNA](#).- A Michigan pro-life group has said it will not contest the state's conclusion that the group did not submit enough valid signatures on a petition to ban dilation and evacuation abortions, and will instead focus its advocacy efforts on the 2020 election.

“We know we submitted signatures from more than 340,047 registered voters. It is tragic that children will continue to be dismembered because we lost just enough signatures due to errors and petition damage like small tears and stains,” Barbara Listing, Right to Life of Michigan President, said in a July 21 statement.

“The effort behind this petition drive was worth it and will carry forward...This was our first attempt to end the dismemberment of babies in Michigan, and we will continue working until we end this form of violence and protect the lives of every unborn child.”

Genevieve Marnon, Right to Life of Michigan's legislative director, told The Detroit News

that this marks the first time that one of RTLTM's initiatives has failed.

Although Right to Life of Michigan submitted 380,000 signatures, the state elections bureau estimated that only about 333,000 were valid. The petition needed 340,047 signatures in order to proceed.

The proposed ban would have made it a felony for a physician to perform a dilation and evacuation abortion. D&E abortions are typically done in the second trimester of pregnancy and result in the dismemberment of an unborn child.

The method is used in Michigan for more than half of all second-trimester abortions, including 84% of those performed after the 16th week of pregnancy, the AP reported.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D) has said she would veto any pro-life legislation. Governor Whitmer last October line-item vetoed from the state's budget \$700,000 in funding for the Michigan Pregnancy and Parenting Support Services Program, to the consternation of the Michigan Catholic Conference and a pro-life group active in the state.

The ballot initiative push was a way for the D&E ban to become law without the need for Whitmer's signature, as Right to Life of Michigan had hoped to submit the ban to the state's Republican-led legislature for enactment rather than put it on the November ballot, The Detroit News reported.

Listing attributed the petition's failure to several overlapping factors, including some signers not knowing their voter registration status or forgetting they already signed the petition.

In addition, based on the high turnout from the 2018 election in Michigan, the threshold the state set for a petition to succeed was higher than normal, Listing said. She said the group this time submitted about 65,000 more signatures than they had in 2013 in their successful petition drive to stop taxes from paying for abortion insurance coverage.

"It wasn't enough this time," she lamented.

Listing also said a "competing" pro-life petition, circulating at the same time as theirs, confused people. That petition sought to ban abortion after the detection of a fetal heartbeat and was sponsored by a group called Michigan Heartbeat Coalition.

The Michigan Catholic Conference had last year thrown its support behind the D&E petition, opposing the heartbeat bill due to the existence of an even stronger piece of anti-abortion legislation.

“It goes without saying that after countless hours and with myriad people volunteering at hundreds of Catholic parishes across the state to collect signatures that this outcome is disappointing,” said Rebecca Mastee, MCC’s policy advocate.

“Each and every person who assisted in this petition drive is cherished and thanked. We have incredible gratitude for their pro-life dedication and the tremendous effort to raise awareness while gathering signatures. Saint Teresa of Calcutta taught us that God does not require us always to be successful, but rather to be faithful; indeed, the effort to protect human life through this petition drive was immense.”

Pro-lifers in several states, such as Tennessee, have opposed heartbeat legislation due to the potential of expensive legal and constitutional challenges.

In addition, the MCC pointed out that Michigan law presently prohibits all abortion, but this law is not enforced due to the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision.

Should *Roe* be overturned, that law banning abortion would go back into effect. But if the proposed heartbeat bill were to become law and *Roe* were to be overturned, MCC argued, it would actually liberalize existing Michigan abortion law and permit the abortion of infants prior to the detection of a fetal heartbeat.

The coalition of Michigan volunteers was not the only group gathering signatures for pro-life petitions during the pandemic. In May, pro-life advocates in Colorado successfully gathered enough signatures to put a late-term abortion ban on the November ballot.

If the late-term abortion ban passes in November, it would mark the first time since 1967 that Colorado would impose voter-approved restrictions on abortion.

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