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Jennifer Carr Allmon

November 1, 2026

Dear Superintendents and Catholic School Administrators,

The Texas bishops would like to provide further pastoral guidance on the rationale for the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department (TCCB ED) policy requiring that every student enrolled in Catholic schools accredited by the TCCB be immunized in accordance with the immunizations schedule adopted by the Texas Department of State Health Services. While conscientious objections or waivers are acceptable for attendance in public schools, we do not allow these waivers in Catholic schools in Texas [Atty. Gen. Op. GA-0420]. It has been our longstanding policy only to accept medical waivers from required immunizations.

The basis for the immunization policy is our duty to support the common good of our diocesan communities, which includes the flourishing Catholic schools. The classic Catholic understanding of the common good was articulated by Pope St. John XXIII in 1961: The common good "embraces the sum total of those conditions of social living which enable members of the community more fully and more readily to achieve their own perfection" (*Mater et Magistra*, no. 65). In this life, the common good is always an aspiration, never fully perfected and often requiring compromise. Our policy on vaccinations is one such compromise.

Some members of our diocesan communities have raised conscience objections regarding our policy on vaccinations, either because of the connection of the vaccines with the moral evil of abortion or because of a concern about the efficacy of the vaccines themselves. While we respect the sincerity of their concerns, we have concluded that permitting a conscience exemption for enrollment in our schools is not the best way to secure the common good for all concerned. Our commitment to that good necessitates a particular concern for students and staff who are immune-compromised. For them, exposure to infectious diseases in the unique conditions of a school can be a serious threat to their health and well-being. At the same time, we also believe that enrolling the small number of individuals who are unable to receive vaccines for medical reasons is a reasonable compromise that does not endanger the overall good of the school community.

More recently, it has become common to hear politicians and others refer to a "religious objection" to immunizations. To be clear, childhood immunization against disease is in no way contrary to Catholic teaching. As regards the moral question of vaccines which may have originated or been tested on material arising from abortion, here, too, after careful consideration and consultation, we have concluded that the use of most vaccines does not conflict with the moral teaching

of our faith. We call attention to a document released by the Pontifical Academy for Life in 2017, written in collaboration with the Italian Bishops' Conference, and the Association of Italian Catholic Doctors, called *Clarification on the Medical and Scientific Nature of Vaccination*. The 2017 document notes declining vaccination rates and encourages vaccinations and concludes, "We believe that all clinically recommended vaccines can be used with a clear conscience and that the use of such vaccines does not signify some sort of cooperation in its preparation to any material originating from an abortion, the moral responsibility to vaccinate is reiterated in order to avoid serious health risks for children and the general population." This is to say, for Catholics, there is no such thing as a "religious" exemption from childhood immunizations.

The Pontifical Academy for Life [2005] is clear in its analysis that one must inform one's conscience properly when making a determination about vaccines. The laudable desire to promote the sanctity of life by rejecting abortion must be balanced against our obligation to protect the well-being of all the students and staff, including groups within our schools particularly susceptible to communicable diseases (those who are immune-compromised and the unborn children of teachers and staff). The bishops have prayerfully discerned that for the protection of all and for the promotion of the common good, they cannot accept a refusal of immunizations against dangerous contagious diseases, such as rubella, unless substantiated by the proper form of a medical waiver.

We understand that some Catholics may continue to disagree with this policy. We continue to pray and advocate for alternative vaccines, but until those vaccines are developed, we cannot ignore the safety of all children and staff in our Catholic schools. In the Catholic moral tradition, we respect the rights of conscience, but those rights have corresponding responsibilities. Parents are free to choose another educational setting if they do not wish to follow our immunization policy.

Yours in Christ,



Archbishop Joe S. Vásquez
Archbishop of Galveston-Houston



Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, M.Sp.S.
Archbishop of San Antonio



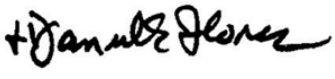
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Apostolic Administrator of Amarillo



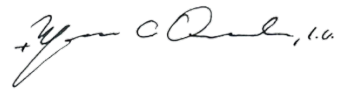
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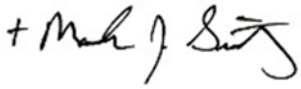
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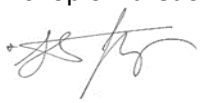
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