



The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor of Pennsylvania
Room 225, Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

April 17, 2015

Dear Governor Wolf:

We write to you today in order to express serious concerns with your nomination of Pedro A. Cortes for Secretary of the Commonwealth. According to the Pennsylvania Department of State's (department) website, "the mission of the department is to protect the health and safety of the public by furthering the highest standards of ethics and competence". Unfortunately, under Mr. Cortes' prior tenure as Secretary of the Commonwealth, the department failed miserably in this regard.

Pennsylvanians were aghast and horrified when a Philadelphia grand jury reported on the atrocities which took place at Dr. Kermit Gosnell's "House of Horrors" abortion clinic. Dr. Gosnell and numerous employees were ultimately convicted of hundreds of heinous crimes perpetrated at his facility. Today, he is serving a life sentence for multiple convictions of first degree murder for slaughtering babies who were born alive after botched abortions he performed. He was also convicted of involuntary manslaughter for causing the death of a woman who died from injuries inflicted by his hand.

The grand jury's report states that the department's attorneys had ample notice of Gosnell's illegal and reckless abortion practices, and the damage he had done to patients, yet despite multiple serious complaints during Secretary Cortes' time leading the department, the State Board of Medicine took no action to suspend or revoke Gosnell's license to practice medicine.

To fully understand the gravity of the failures of the department throughout Secretary Cortes' service, one needs to read directly from the grand jury's damaging report:

"Attorneys for Pennsylvania's Department of State disregarded notices that numerous patients of Gosnell were hospitalized – infected, with fetal remains still inside them; and with perforated uteruses, cervixes, and bowels. Incredibly, in 2004, Department of State attorneys closed – without investigation – a case reported to the Board involving the death of 22-year-old Semika Shaw.

Between 2002 and 2009, Board of Medicine attorneys reviewed five cases involving malpractice and other complaints against Gosnell. None of the assigned attorneys, or their supervisors, suggested that the Board take action against the deviant doctor. In fact, despite serious allegations, three of the cases were closed without any investigation. The other two were investigated and then closed – without any action being taken."

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It is important to note that each of these cases were reviewed during the eight years that Secretary Cortes was overseeing the department. We understand that Secretary Cortes has cited a Supreme Court ruling in the 1992 *Lyness* case as an excuse to deflect blame for the Gosnell fiasco. In fact, the *Lyness* decision had no direct impact on the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

In his resume and biography Secretary Cortes takes credit for various achievements in dealing with occupational and professional licensure complaints and investigations during his tenure. Yet at the same time he accepts no responsibility for the documented blatant failures of those same units under his leadership.

Regardless of any legal semantics, it is clear that the Secretary of the Commonwealth is ultimately responsible for any accomplishments or failures which occur under his watch. In fact, the grand jury report states that the problems at the department went well beyond individual prosecuting attorneys. The report also concluded that there were clear problems with the procedures, training, management and motivation within the department under Secretary Cortes' leadership. To this date, Mr. Cortes has not offered a satisfactory explanation for how the Gosnell atrocities were able to be committed under his watch.

As you know, the Gosnell case was extremely well publicized and led to the legislature enacting new statutory standards and regulations regarding abortion clinics in the Commonwealth. Given that fact, it is deeply troubling to us that you would nominate someone for such an important position as Secretary of the Commonwealth despite his deep ties to this national nightmare.

We thank you for your consideration of these facts and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Members of the Pro-Life Caucus
Senate & House of Representatives

SENATE MEMBERS OF THE PRO-LIFE CAUCUS



Richard L. Alloway, II



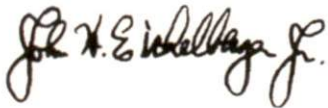
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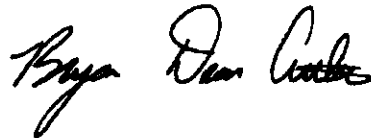


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House Pro-Life Caucus Members



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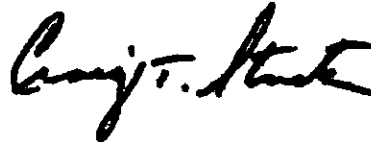
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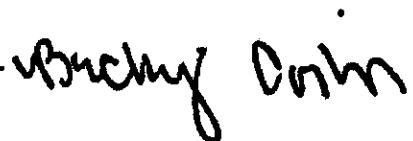
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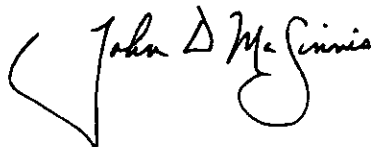
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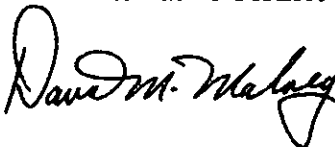
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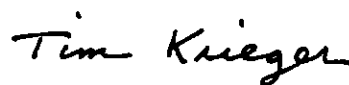
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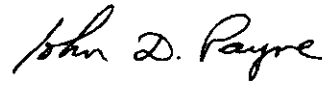
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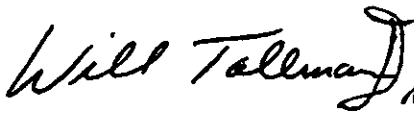
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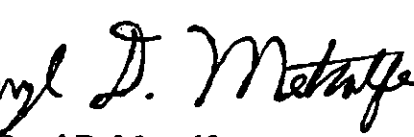
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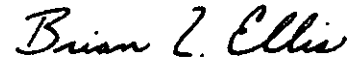
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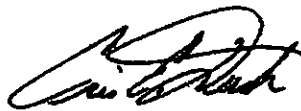
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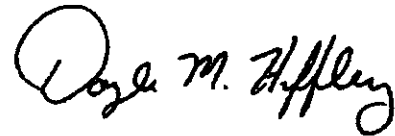
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