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Ministry

A Carmelite Sister comforts a resident Aug. 21, 2026, at St. Patrick's Residence in Naperville, Ill. (OSV News/Courtesy of Becket)

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September 3, 2026

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Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago, two orders of Catholic nuns, and an Illinois pharmacist sued Illinois Sept. 3 over the state's physician-assisted suicide law, which permits physicians to aid terminally ill adults in dying by suicide.

In their lawsuit, the individuals and religious orders — the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm and the Chicago Province of the Little Sisters of the Poor — argued that the law, which is set to take effect Sept. 12, would require them to facilitate such deaths for their patients in violation of their faith.

"The Gospel calls us to uphold the inviolable dignity and worth of the human person, from life's first moment to its natural end," Cupich said in a statement. "As Catholics, we oppose efforts to undermine human dignity by pushing our brothers and sisters toward suicide. We pray that the courts will protect our freedom to continue advocating and caring for the sick and dying as our faith demands."

Supporters of legalizing physician-assisted suicide argue the practice offers autonomy to suffering or terminally ill individuals in their final days, but opponents argue legalizing the practice disregards the dignity of human life and leaves those who are ill or dying vulnerable to coercion, among other concerns.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church specifically condemns the practice of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide as "morally unacceptable" and a violation of the Fifth Commandment, "You shall not kill."

In a statement issued Dec. 12 when he signed the law, Gov. JB Pritzker, D-Ill., argued the practice offers "freedom and choice at the end of life in the midst of personal heartbreak."

But in a Sept. 3 statement, Mother Julie Marie, mother provincial of the Chicago Province of the Little Sisters of the Poor, said, "The elderly people who come to our homes are looking for a place where they will be cherished and cared for until natural death."

"They should be free to choose that kind of care without having assisted suicide inserted into it by the state," she said. "We simply want to continue giving them the loving home they came to us for."

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In a statement regarding the lawsuit, Mark Rienzi, president of Becket and lead attorney for the healthcare providers, argued, "The state should stop trying to make Catholic nuns help patients kill themselves."

"It is awful for Illinois to be forcing every sick and dying person within its borders to hear its message of suicide at their lowest moment — regardless of whether they want it or not. Patients deserve the freedom to seek healing, hope, and accompaniment without the government forcing suicide into the conversation," Rienzi said. "The Constitution protects that freedom."

The Illinois law was also previously temporarily blocked by a federal judge for specific "Catholic health care entities" under the authority of Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield, four Catholic doctors and Lutheran Care Center, a nursing home in south-central Illinois, in response to a separate lawsuit.

A federal judge in July also temporarily shielded four orders of women religious and Catholic healthcare ministries from enforcement of a similar New York state law allowing physicians to aid terminally ill adults in dying by suicide.

The Catholic entities in the Empire State — the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm, the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne, the Missionary Sisters of St. Benedict and the Little Sisters of the Poor — sued over New York's assisted suicide law, arguing it would require them to facilitate such deaths for their patients in violation of their faith.

Related: Court shields women religious from NY assisted suicide law