June 09, 2025

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Thune, Minority Leaders Schumer and Jeffries:

On behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, we write to offer some principles and policy recommendations concerning artificial intelligence (AI). We are not technical experts, but pastors entrusted with concern for the life and dignity of the human person and the common good.

AI offers both opportunities and challenges to our nation and the world. As our new Holy Father Pope Leo XIV reminds us, AI requires "responsibility and discernment in order to ensure it can be used for the good of all, so that it can benefit all of humanity." Congressional response to this rapidly developing technology should include a regulatory framework informed by ethical principles and reasonable policy considerations. We thank you for taking the time to consider these proposals.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

- **Dignity of the Human Person**. The inherent dignity of every human person must always be at the center of technological development. As the Church's teaching reminds us, technology must be directed to "serve the human person and contribute to the pursuit of greater justice, more extensive fraternity, and a more human order of social relations" (*Gaudium et spes*, no. 35). AI is a tool that, when informed by sound moral principles, can help overcome many of life's obstacles and improve the human condition. But this technology should supplement what human beings do, not replace them or their moral judgments. We also must avoid temptations toward transhumanism or equating AI itself with human life.

- **Care for the Poor.** The U.S. bishops emphasize the need for moral criteria both in economic decisions and technological development. AI will only serve all when it works to assist our poorest and most vulnerable sisters and brothers and when they can equitably participate in and benefit from its development and use. There is a legitimate concern, however, that without deliberate ethical and regulatory safeguards in place, AI "could be used to perpetuate marginalization and discrimination, create new forms of poverty, widen the 'digital divide,' and worsen existing social inequalities" (*Antiqua et nova*, no. 52).

- **Respect for the Truth.** AI offers the opportunity to develop vast amounts of information in creative ways, share knowledge, and enhance communication among people. However, we are increasingly living in a time

that the late Pope Francis described as a "growing crisis of truth" *(Message to World Economic Forum, 2025)*. With the rise in "deepfakes," misuse of news and political information to manipulate public opinion,

and the spread of falsehoods, AI is being used by some to undermine the dignity of persons and respect for the truth. AI systems must have human oversight and well-defined accountability in order to promote transparency, and fair democratic processes.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- **Family Life.** The family is **"**the place of origin and the most effective means for humanizing and personalizing society" (*Familiaris consortio*, no. 43). While AI can contribute to the efficiency of certain daily tasks and aid in communication, the isolating effect of technology needs to be counteracted. AI should work to strengthen and support family life. Policies should ensure that AI does not promote or enhance morally offensive uses of reproductive technologies and genetic manipulation. Policies should also be enacted to protect children online and address the scourge of pornography, including 'virtual child pornography.'

- **Labor and the Economy.** It is important to recall that labor (work) has inherent worth and is essential to a person's dignity. "Human work not only proceeds from the person, but it is also essentially ordered to and has its final goal in the human person" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 272). AI has many labor-saving advantages, but these should not deprive a person of the dignity of work and contributing to the greater society. We are particularly concerned about job displacement, inequality, and exploitation. Policies and regulations should ensure protections for workers, promote education and job training, require public accountability for government use of AI, and require human oversight in AI-driven employment decisions. To encourage the artistic and creative spirit, we also call for the protection of data and intellectual property rights.

- **Healthcare, Education, and Political and Civic Life.** Everyone is created in the image of God and "has the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and, finally, the necessary social services" (*Pacem in terris*, nos. 11;13). AI has the potential to improve many aspects of life and society. It has led to the development of new medicines and technologies to improve health. It can support new tools for learning and transform how we communicate and participate in society. However, its development has already introduced profound moral questions which affect integral human development and the authentic formation of the human person. If not thoughtfully regulated, it has even greater possibilities of further polarizing society and worsening inequalities. For example, automated decision-making systems – used in areas such as employment screening, loan approvals, healthcare, public benefit screening, and immigration processing – can reinforce existing biases or introduce a utilitarian approach devoid of necessary human considerations, with potentially devastating consequences.

- **Warfare.** The bishops have consistently raised concerns about the development and use of lethal autonomous weapons. "The enormous and growing possibilities offered by new technologies, have granted war an uncontrollable destructive power over great numbers of innocent civilians" (*Fratelli tutti*, no. 258). Policies should make clear that human control over any weapon system is essential to mitigate the horrors of warfare and the undermining of fundamental human rights.

- **Energy and Environment**. In the development of energy and environmental policy, we must remember to listen to both the "cry of the earth' and the 'cry of the poor" (*Laudato si,*no. 49). AI may hold great benefits

in finding solutions to the current crises of energy and the environment, but it may also contribute to serious problems by requiring huge expenditures on energy and an increased consumption of resources. It creates electronic waste containing mercury and lead, which harms children, the unborn, and wildlife. We ask you to promote policies that encourage making AI searches and data centers more energy efficient and promote responsible water and component recycling.

These ethical principles and select policy recommendations are not intended to be exhaustive, but a modest initial reflection for your consideration as you deliberate on options for federal policy and regulatory action. We thank you for your consideration. Please be assured of our prayers and readiness to assist you in this important and timely work.

Sincerely,

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Chairman, USCCB Committee on
Communications

Most Rev. David M. O'Connell, C.M., J.C.D
Bishop of Trenton
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Most Rev. Borys Gudziak
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Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas
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