



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

For Immediate Release

March 23, 2015

Catholic Conference Addresses State Budget Issues

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) is urging state legislators to prioritize the needs of vulnerable individuals and families as they review the proposed state budget over the next couple of months. The WCC's recommendations will also be the focal point for advocacy during the April 8th *Catholics at the Capitol* gathering in Madison.

“The WCC does not take a position for or against the state budget as a whole,” explained WCC Executive Director John Huebscher. “But the Conference does recognize that budgets are moral documents through which our state makes choices and sets priorities.”

The WCC supports the following five budget items and urges lawmakers to keep them in the final document:

- Expanding Family Care to all Wisconsin counties so that more elders and people with disabilities can receive vital long-term care. However, the WCC questions drastic proposed changes to the current member-focused, cost-effective, localized model of providing care.
- Extending Medicaid coverage for residential-based substance abuse treatment.
- Adding \$2 million in Fiscal Year 2016-17 for treatment services to sex-trafficked children especially in rural areas.
- Providing an additional \$5 million in Fiscal Year 2016-17 to expand services to survivors of domestic violence and their families.
- Funding the expansion of parental choice in education throughout the state for lower income families.

The WCC is also asking that the following three items be removed from the budget bill:

- Requiring drug tests for certain applicants for Unemployment Insurance benefits, Transform Milwaukee, Transitional Jobs, Children First, and Trial Employment Match Program, and childless adults seeking FoodShare and/or Medicaid benefits.
- Reducing the lifetime limits for receiving benefits under Wisconsin Works (W-2) from 60 months to 48 months.

- Requiring the Department of Health Services (DHS) to seek a federal waiver requesting the authority to impose a 48-month eligibility limit and monthly premiums on non-disabled, childless adult BadgerCare recipients.

Finally, the WCC is asking the state to accept federal funds available to Wisconsin under the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA). Not only would this provide health coverage to more people of limited means, but it would also make more than \$300 million in General Purpose Revenue (GPR) funds available for other pressing needs.

“Two important themes of Catholic social teaching are respect for the life and dignity of the human person and the promotion of the common good,” Huebscher said. “More specifically, every public policy should be measured by how it addresses the needs of the poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized so that they can have the opportunity to lead dignified lives and participate as fully as possible in the life of the community.”

“Our advocacy on the state budget is intended to advance those values,” he concluded.

A WCC Issue Brief expanding on these positions is available on the WCC’s website at www.wisconsincatholic.org.

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