



CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONFERENCE
134 FARMINGTON AVENUE
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06105-3784

CHRISTOPHER C. HEALY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DEACON DAVID W. REYNOLDS
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

ANNE S. LAMONICA
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
FOR EDUCATION

LORI A. STEWART
LEGISLATIVE LIAISON

Testimony on
*S.B. 1 "An Act Concerning
Earned Family and Medical Leave"*

*By Christopher C. Healy
Executive Director, Connecticut Catholic Conference*

Labor and Public Employees Committee
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The Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference, the public policy office of Connecticut's Catholic Bishops, supports Senate Bill 1 that would provide Connecticut workers with paid family and medical leave. The health and spiritual strength of all families is critical to a just society and this legislation will strengthen every family and provide other benefits to our economy and state.

Gov. Lamont and the proponents of this bill should be commended for making this legislation a top priority

For too long, there has been much talk about strengthening a family's ability to remain intact, vibrant, and responsible for its rightful role as the central element to the collective good. Yet, the challenges of raising a family are greater than ever. New mothers should be able to care for their newborns without fear of missing a paycheck. Similarly, when illness or tragedy strikes, working parents, who often care for both their children and aging parents, would benefit from the relief that this bill offers so that they can fulfill their obligations to their spouses and children.

The Catholic Church teaches that the family is the cornerstone of our society. If we have healthy, strong, and stable families, children grow into responsible and productive members of society. Healthy families also are essential to a strong growing economy. A paid family and medical leave program will help us attain these goals because workers will no longer have to decide between taking care of a loved one or earning a paycheck, perhaps with insurance coverage.

Senate Bill 1 also addresses legitimate concerns about funding such a program and the impact on employers. These bills propose the establishment of a special fund that would make payments

to employees taking family and medical leave. The funds would not come from the employers, but from all Connecticut employees. An employer would not be burdened with paying two salaries should a paid family and medical leave policy be enacted.

The Connecticut Catholic Conference believes that this legislation addresses an extremely important issue for Connecticut families. Delaying the adoption of paid family and medical leave in Connecticut will be of no benefit to the people of our state. This legislation is an excellent start to a more just and productive workplace, while providing the financial and emotional security that workers and their families have earned and deserve.