



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER
Secretariat for Administration

February 11, 2014

The Honorable Andrew White, Chair
House Labor, Industrial, and Rehabilitative Services Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 307
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: HB 1403 (Establishing a State Minimum Hourly Wage)

Dear Representative White and Members of the Labor, Industrial, and Rehabilitative Services Committee:

As Director of the Office of Public Policy of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, and on behalf of Bishop Peter Libasci, I write to express our support for HB 1403.

Through its parishes, New Hampshire Catholic Charities, and other ministries, the Catholic Church in New Hampshire is the largest non-governmental provider of charitable services in the State. We see the tragic human and social consequences on individuals, their families, and society when workers cannot support themselves and their families by their own labor. New Hampshire currently does not have its own minimum hourly wage, and the federal rate is \$7.25. A full-time worker making this rate of pay will earn little more than \$15,000 annually, hardly enough to pay for food and rent, let alone to support a family.

Throughout the history of the social teachings of the Church, the right of all people to fair compensation for their labor has been upheld as an essential element of a just society. As early as the late 19th century, Pope Leo XIII recognized the principle that workers should be paid a wage sufficient to support a family. Over 120 years later, Pope Francis frequently echoes his predecessors in highlighting the importance of providing opportunities for meaningful work as a path out of poverty.

The Diocese supports prudent increases in the minimum wage, such as HB 1403, as one of many ways to address the needs of New Hampshire citizens living in poverty. We encourage you to take the needs of our poorest citizens to heart – to truly examine poverty in our State and seek solutions to feed the hungry, bring fair housing to the homeless, create jobs, provide financial education, and welcome the stranger.

In the words of Pope Francis, “poverty in the world is a scandal.” While we support HB 1403 as one small step forward in addressing that problem, we urge the Legislature to view the issue of poverty in our state in a truly *comprehensive* way and to act decisively toward helping the many in need in New Hampshire. Thank you for your consideration of our testimony and your service to the people of New Hampshire.

Sincerely,

Meredith P. Cook, Esq.
Director, Office of Public Policy

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