

DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

March 25, 2021

The Hon. William Infantine, Chair
And Members of the House Labor Committee
Legislative Office Building
Concord, NH 03301

Re: SB 61 (Prohibiting collective bargaining agreements that require employees to join or contribute to a labor union)

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

As the Director of the Office of Public Policy for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, and on behalf of Bishop Peter Libasci, I write to respectfully register our opposition to SB 61.

The Catholic Church considers that, while the Church and the political community are autonomous from one another, “both, under different titles, are devoted to the personal and social vocation of the same people”, and therefore the more that both can work cooperatively together the more they will be able to advance the good of all. Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 76. It is in that vein that we offer these comments on SB 61.

In 1981, Pope John Paul II issued an encyclical letter called *Laborem Exercens* (“On Human Work”) that itself marked the 90th anniversary of a prior encyclical called *Rerum Novarum* (“The Condition of Labor”). (Encyclical letters are the primary teaching documents issued by Popes). As the publication dates of those letters show, the dignity of work has been a particular focus of Catholic thought ever since the Industrial Revolution. Pope John Paul said that “work expresses human dignity and increases it,” and indeed is nothing less than “a sharing in the activity of the Creator.” Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens* 9, 25.

One of the central points of this letter was to emphasize the priority of people over things. This means that the economy must serve human beings, not the other way around. *Id.*, 12. In this light, Pope John Paul called labor unions “indispensable elements of social life in modern society” that have the role of securing “the just rights of workers within the framework of the common good of the whole society.” *Id.*, 20.

This reference to the common good should be closely noted, because the common good is not just a cornerstone principle of Catholic social teaching, but the foundational purpose of our state government as well. NH Constitution, Part 1 Art. 1. To fulfill the principle of the common good, both unions and employers are obligated to work not just to advance their own interests, but to advance economic justice and the well-being of all. *Laborem Exercens*, 20.

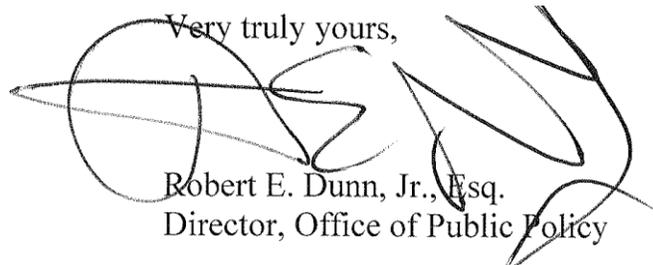
With this background in mind, there are several questions that we would propose as a useful framework for deliberation on SB 61:

- Does SB 61 benefit the common good?
- Does SB 61 provide a just balance between the interests of workers and the interests of employers?
- Does SB 61 protect the natural right of workers to assemble and form associations?

In our view, SB 61 would have the effect of substantially diminishing the ability of unions to carry out their duties, and we think that these questions produce answers in the negative. Therefore, we respectfully oppose SB 61, and we ask that you recommend it as inexpedient to legislate.

Thank you for your kind consideration of our views.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. E. Dunn, Jr.', is written over the typed name and title. The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract, with a large loop on the left side.

Robert E. Dunn, Jr., Esq.
Director, Office of Public Policy