



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER  
*Secretariat for Administration*

January 24, 2013

The Honorable James MacKay  
House Health, Human Services & Elderly Affairs Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 205  
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

**Re: HB 121 (Requiring Drug Testing of Applicants for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF))**

Dear Representative MacKay and Members of the House Health, Human Services & Elderly Affairs Committee:

As the 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 **opposition to HB 121**. This bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services to implement a drug testing program for applicants of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

It is unreasonable to suspect every applicant for temporary assistance is an abuser of controlled substances. The legislation is worsened by requiring that applicants bear the cost of a drug test at a time when their families need help to survive. Families should not be required to take money from their budget to pay for a drug test and away from necessities such as food and utilities because of a persistent myth that people who receive welfare engage in drug use at a higher percentage than people in the general population. The burden of paying for a drug test unquestionably is unfair, especially for the vast majority of families whose parents would test negative for controlled substances.

A fundamental criterion for our state's welfare policy should be protecting human life and human dignity. We support safeguarding children and discouraging inappropriate and morally destructive behavior, but applying this policy across the board to all applicants at an additional expense and without reason of suspicion is unjust.

Our state policy should encourage strong, intact families; help to sustain those most vulnerable; and affirm self-discipline. While it is challenging to develop a policy that ensures assistance for the needy without enabling the dependency of those who can and should support themselves, we should not have a policy that requires us to abandon those among us who cannot help themselves, or who, with a little more time, patience, and assistance, would be able to help themselves and their families.



This bill is contrary to good public policy from a financial perspective and from the even more important perspective of our moral values as citizens. Therefore, we urge you to recommend this bill as inexpedient to legislate. Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the people of the State of New Hampshire.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Meredith Cook".

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

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