



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER
Secretariat for Administration and Community Affairs

January 10, 2012

The Honorable Kenneth L. Weyler
Chair, House Finance Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 210
Concord, NH 03301

Re: HB 1658 (Restrictions on TANF)

Dear Representative Weyler and Members of the Committee:

As Chancellor of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, and on behalf of Bishop Peter Libasci, I want to register our opposition to HB 1658. HB 1658 would amend current law so as to prohibit (with certain exceptions) an increase in the level of financial assistance benefits to a family as a result of the birth of a child during the eligibility period for benefits.

While I do not believe that this is the sponsor's intent, the reality and the practical effect of this bill would be to punish poor people for having children. Bills like this are important for what they say about our values as a state, and we believe that the passage of this bill would send exactly the wrong message about the principles we hold dear as citizens of New Hampshire.

In contrast to the significant financial impact which this would undoubtedly have on the individual families affected, this bill would have only limited on-going financial benefit to the state. Indeed, according to the fiscal note developed by the Department of Health & Human Services, this bill would have an up-front net *cost* to the State of \$182,948 in the first year, and produce a net savings to the State in subsequent years of only \$34,104. As a result, even after this system breaks even some time in year five, the State will derive only a minimal amount of savings.

Moreover, the fiscal note also indicates that families who cannot meet their basic financial needs through the TANF program may seek additional support for housing and food from their local welfare offices. Thus, this bill might well result in further local expenditures.

Accordingly, this bill is contrary to good public policy both from a financial perspective and from the even more important perspective of our moral values as citizens. Therefore, we ask that you recommend this bill as inexpedient to legislate.

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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, appearing to read "Diane M. Quinlan".

Diane Murphy Quinlan
Chancellor