



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

March 18, 2013

The Honorable Mary Jane Wallner, Chair
House Finance Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 210-211
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: New Hampshire State Budget 2014-2015

Dear Representative Wallner and Members of the House Finance Committee:

As the Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester and as a citizen of New Hampshire, I thank you for your extensive work this session to craft our State budget. I am impressed by the time you have spent out in the communities listening to people and groups as they have presented to you their needs and interests. I write to urge you to consider another viewpoint as you reach your final decision and vote – the common good of all New Hampshire citizens.

Throughout this budget process, you have heard from those sincerely dedicated to a particular line item or revenue source. With each new hearing, you are keenly aware that the decisions you make will have consequences for many. I ask you to consider viewing the budget not from the lens of these individual interests but from the perspective of the entire community-- putting the good of the entire community before the demands of a few, for the good of all as well as for each individual.

I am compelled to write to you because care for the poor and vulnerable is at the core of Catholic teaching – to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the ill, and visit the imprisoned. As Pope Benedict XVI taught, “love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential to [the Church] as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel” (*Deus Caritas Est*, no. 22).

It is worth noting the obligation to care for the poor is not limited to a religious viewpoint, however, and is included in our State Constitution. The Constitution provides that forming people into a society was intended “to ensure the protection of *others*” (Part 1, Article 3). The framers also declared that it is the duty of the legislators and magistrates, in all future periods of this government . . . to countenance and inculcate the principles of humanity and general benevolence . . . public and private charity . . . and generous sentiments among the people . . . (Part 2, Article 83). Therefore, care for the poor is not just an ideal principle; it is a duty assigned to the General Court by the Constitution of our State.

The task before you is arduous in these times of great economic difficulty. May I suggest, however, that although much larger in scale, your responsibility is analogous to that of our many New Hampshire families struggling to make ends meet. They gather around the table and make

decisions as to which services in their household are essential and which must be cut to meet their budget, and they apply these lessons that should ring true in our State House:

- *Don't spend what you don't have.* The Catholic Bishops of the United States have recognized the serious deficits our country faces. Governments must make difficult decisions about how to allocate burdens and sacrifices as well as balancing resources and needs.
- *Borrow for important priorities.* Although the general rule is that we should not spend what we do not have, we should borrow for important priorities. In the family, the home mortgage is the most common example. In government, borrowing to build schools and other improvements for the benefit the community for generations to come is a laudable goal.
- *Take care of the weak.* In the family, if we look around the table and one of our members is sick, elderly, unemployed, or otherwise in need of care, we sacrifice to surround that individual with the needed attention. The same must be true as we look at our State budget. Our budget must make it a priority to protect the most vulnerable members of our human family.
- *We are in this together.* When a family faces economic challenges, every member must contribute and sacrifice for the good of the family as a whole. The same is true for our human family here in the Granite State. The Catholic ministries of New Hampshire answer the call of the Gospel and contribute to the common good every day, serving as the largest non-governmental provider of charitable services in the State. We also ask that the State, which bears a great responsibility for providing assistance to those in need, also does its share.

As you face the difficult task before you, I urge you to consider the common good of all New Hampshire citizens. May you keep in mind the lessons of the family table, especially bearing in mind the need to first protect those in most need of attention in our human family.

My prayerful best wishes are with you as you complete the task before you. Grateful for your consideration of these thoughts and with deep appreciation for your service to the State of New Hampshire, I remain

Yours in the All-Holy Trinity
And the Mother of God,



Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci
Bishop of Manchester