



**DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER**  
*Secretariat for Administration and Community Affairs*

January 19, 2010

Representative David E. Cote, Chair  
House Judiciary Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Room 208  
Concord, NH 03301

Re: HCR 26 (affirming the state's religious heritage and constitutional rights to practice religion)

Dear Representative Cote:

As Chancellor of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, and on behalf of Bishop John McCormack, I want to register our support for HCR 26, which seeks to restrict the State from burdening the free exercise of religion.

Religious freedom is at the heart of our nation's founding principles and is the first of the freedoms recognized in the Bill of Rights. It lies at the heart of human rights from the perspective of Catholic teaching. As the United States bishops have said:

Faith is oriented to the ultimate concern and purpose of human life. To deny religious freedom is to rob human persons of the ultimate meaning and direction of their lives. Constraining religious liberty diminishes our humanity.

While we continue to vigorously oppose measures such as the same sex marriage law, the concerns presented by those laws relate not just to the substance of the laws, but the dilemma which they present for people with religious beliefs contrary to what those laws stand for. As the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has said, these laws "pose dramatic problems of conscience for morally upright people." It is a tenant of Catholic belief, and we think it is also a basic principle of the civil rights of all Americans, that people be allowed to refuse to cooperate in acts which they believe are morally wrong.

Given the fact that the legislature has enacted laws over the past several years which have been indisputably run contrary to the historical moral traditions of Western civilization, it is all the more important that the legislature protect the rights of those who seek nothing more than to adhere to those religious and moral beliefs.

Accordingly, we urge the Committee to vote in favor of HCR 26.

Thank you for your service to the people of New Hampshire.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Diane Murphy Quinlan, Esq.

Chancellor