



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

January 10, 2024

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

Re: HB 1377 (Right to Work)

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 HB 1377, legislation regarding “Right to Work”. We have opposed similar bills in the past, most recently in 2021 (as many of the members of the Committee will recall, SB 61 was indefinitely postponed in the House during that legislative session.)

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 respectfully offer these comments on HB 1377.

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.

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One of the central points of this letter was the need to emphasize the priority of people over things, and to ensure that the economy serves people, 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.

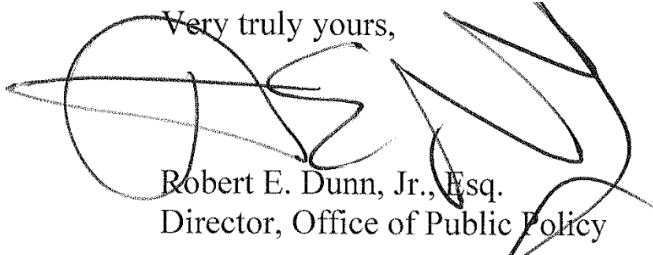
With this background in mind, there are several questions that we would propose as a useful framework for deliberation on HB 1377:

- Does HB 1377 benefit the common good?
- Does HB 1377 provide a just balance between the interests of workers and the interests of employers?
- Does HB 1377 protect the natural right of workers to assemble and form associations?

Because in our view HB 1377 has the effect of substantially diminishing the ability of unions to carry out their duties, we think that these questions produce negative answers. Therefore, we respectfully oppose HB 1377.

Thank you as always for your kind consideration of our views.

Very truly yours,



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