



CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONFERENCE  
134 FARMINGTON AVENUE  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06105-3784

CHRISTOPHER C. HEALY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DEACON DAVID W. REYNOLDS  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR  
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

ANNE S. LAMONICA  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR  
FOR EDUCATION

LORI A. STEWART  
LEGISLATIVE LIAISON

Testimony in Support of House Bill No. 6416

***AN ACT CONCERNING  
THE REMOVAL OF LIENS ON THE PROPERTY OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE BENEFICIARIES***

Human Services Committee Public Hearing; February 16, 2021

As the public policy office of Connecticut's Catholic Bishops, the Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference (the Conference) supports the intent of House Bill No. 6416 and the following modifications:

- Removal of all existing real estate liens
- Elimination of the use of future real estate liens
- Exemption of all legal settlements from recovery

Catholic teaching states that "Society has a moral obligation, including governmental action where necessary, to assure opportunity, meet basic human needs, and pursue justice in economic life."<sup>1</sup>

Nationally, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops encourages policies that "form a 'Circle of Protection' around programs that serve poor and vulnerable people in our communities and avoid placing additional burdens on people and families struggling to live in dignity."<sup>2</sup>

In our state (per the Department of Social Services' 2018 and 2019 annual reports), "DSS serves about 1 million residents of all ages in all 169 Connecticut cities and towns." In other words, *before* COVID-19 struck, fellow residents in *each* of our state's 169 towns received government assistance of some type at some point. Imagine how many more Connecticut residents in each of our 169 towns have been impacted and in need *since* COVID-19.

As this past year has graphically illuminated, any one of us could become vulnerable to unforeseen economic challenges. The argument against welfare liens posits that one's past economic adversity should not bind that person or that family to a lifelong anchor poised to plunge them – once again – into the depths of economic turmoil when they may be finally "coming up for air".

"For families leaving welfare, the availability of ... supports ... can be key in making a lasting transition to economic self-sufficiency."<sup>3</sup> H.B. 6416 can be such a support.

The Conference urges the Human Services committee to pass H.B. 6416.

<sup>1</sup> *A Catholic Framework for Economic Life*; US Catholic Bishops; 1996; (No. 8)

<sup>2</sup> [www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/safety-net-income-support/index.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/safety-net-income-support/index.cfm)

<sup>3</sup> *Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)*; USCCB Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development; Office of Domestic Social Development; February 2011