



CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONFERENCE
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Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference
Testimony Supporting the Concept of House Bill No. 5310

*AN ACT ELIMINATING STATE RECOVERY OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE
EXCEPT AS REQUIRED UNDER FEDERAL LAW*

Human Services Committee Public Hearing
Legislative Office Building
Room 2A
March 5, 2020

As the public policy office of Connecticut's Catholic Bishops, the Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference (the Conference) supports House Bill No. 5310 in concept. The Conference supports the intention of this bill, and will follow its legislative trajectory during the remainder of this session.

At the national level, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) *Current Advocacy Position* states:

The USCCB supports policies that protect human life and dignity, strengthen families, encourage and reward work, preserve a safety net for the vulnerable, and build public/private partnerships to overcome poverty...policies should 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."¹

Additionally, the Catholic Church teaches that, "Society has a moral obligation, including governmental action where necessary, to assure opportunity, meet basic human needs, and pursue justice in economic life."²

Studies show that situational poverty may result when an individual/family experiences poverty due to a decrease in income and/or support following a *specific* change such as a job loss, divorce, death, etc. Although there may be a domino effect caused by this one significant change, or even a confluence of factors, families experiencing situational poverty tend to remain hopeful, regarding this as a temporary setback.³

Per the Department of Social Services (DSS) website, "DSS serves about 1 million residents of all ages in all 169 Connecticut cities and towns."⁴ That number would seem to suggest that in *each* of our state's 169 towns, residents of *all* ages have found themselves in a "situation" where they have needed some form of governmental assistance at a certain point. That number would also seem to suggest that each of us might know someone who is/has been the recipient of DSS services.

Juxtaposed against this paradigm of situational poverty is additional research...

Studies also show that wealth begets wealth. "Dynastic (generational) wealth occurs when families pass money down from one generation to the next. It's a cyclic process: Each generation can grow the previous generation's

¹ www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/safety-net-income-support/index.cfm

² *A Catholic Framework for Economic Life*; US Catholic Bishops; 1996; (No. 8)

³ <https://www.udemy.com/blog/types-of-poverty/>

⁴ <https://portal.ct.gov/DSS/About-the-Department-of-Social-Services>

money and leave it to the next generation, which then continues to grow it. This pattern of keeping assets within the family (creates multi-generational wealth).”⁵

Equally, generational (cyclical) poverty is also passed from one generation to the next - for at least two to three generations, and one of the most damaging outcomes of generational poverty is the constant presence of hopelessness. Hopelessness is the key factor in creating the cycle.⁶

A past adverse situation should not doom an individual/family to the potential cycle of generational poverty. “For families leaving welfare, the availability of...supports....can be key to making a lasting transition to economic self-sufficiency.”⁷

The passage of H.B. 5310 has the power to stop this potential cycle in its tracks – treating services provided by DSS as a grant, rather than a collateral-secured loan. This would allow past welfare recipients a fair chance at economic stability: a tangible American Dream.

⁵ <https://www.businessinsider.com/trust-fund-dynastic-wealth-income-inequality-2019-3>

⁶ http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_909.html

⁷ *Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)*; USCCB Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development; Office of Domestic Social Development; February 2011