



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: State Representative Joel Kleefisch, Chair
Members, Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice

FROM: Barbara Sella, Associate Director *Barbara Sella*

DATE: December 5, 2007

RE: AB 544: Human Trafficking

The WCC strongly supports Senate Bill 292 and Assembly Bill 544, which would criminalize human trafficking in Wisconsin.

Human trafficking constitutes one of the gravest offenses against the human family. It preys upon the poorest men, women, and children, who are frequently tricked or coerced into performing the most degrading forms of human labor. It denies everything that a civilized society stands for and that Catholic social teaching espouses: the protection of human dignity and human rights; the preferential option for the poor; the call to family and community; the rights of workers; and solidarity.

The Catholic church, along with other religious and secular institutions, has been involved in combating human trafficking both nationally and internationally for some time. In the U.S., the Catholic Coalition Against Human Trafficking, which consists of about twenty Catholic organizations, was one of the groups that helped draft the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and its subsequent reauthorizations.

Just this past September, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issued a statement calling on Catholics to educate themselves and others about the plight of trafficking victims, and to make parishes "centers for action to help identify survivors and provide them support." "As Catholic bishops," the statement concluded, "we pledge to use the resources of the church to help end this affliction. We also pledge to use our teaching authority to educate Catholics and others about human trafficking."

The WCC therefore applauds the sponsors of Senate Bill 292 and Assembly Bill 544 in bringing this issue to the attention of the public and in striving to give victims of trafficking in our state some hope that they will be delivered from their bondage, and that their captors will be brought to justice.