



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **WCC HELPS DEFEAT RENT-TO-OWN LEGISLATION**

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference joined other pro-consumer groups to persuade legislators to reject a bill to exempt rent-to-own (RTO) businesses from key provisions of Wisconsin's Consumer Act (WCA).

The Wisconsin Assembly approved Assembly Bill 582 on the last day of the legislative session, but the Senate declined to consider the bill before it adjourned for the year. In the closing days of the session, staff of Catholic Charities agencies and St. Vincent de Paul Society Councils were among those who made phone calls to legislators urging that the bill not be approved.

Backers of the bill had argued rent-to-own businesses can foster economic development for firms that sell furniture, appliances, and other goods that people purchase on credit. However, staff at Catholic Charities and St. Vincent de Paul agencies observed that those who are poor often end up paying the most for goods and services.

In a memo to legislators, WCC Executive Director, John Huebscher, cited those insights and argued that "one of the tragic aspects of poverty is that those who are least able to pay for goods often end up paying the most. Public policy should not compound that tragedy by encouraging businesses that depend on ignorance and indebtedness."

"When economic development creates jobs that pay a living wage and offer good benefits it fosters the common good. Measures that weaken consumer protection and expose needy families to additional exploitation do not," Huebscher added.

Groups joining the WCC in opposing AB 582 included the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Council of Churches, Legal Action of Wisconsin, the State Bar of Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group (WISPIRG).

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