



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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**For Immediate Release**

### **CATHOLIC CONFERENCE BACKS INCREASE IN MINIMUM WAGE**

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) has endorsed Senate Bill 1, legislation that would increase the minimum wage for workers in Wisconsin. As the public policy voice of Wisconsin's Roman Catholic bishops, the WCC testified that a proposal to raise the minimum wage "is consistent with the tenets of Catholic social teaching on the dignity of workers, the needs of low income wage earners in our state."

WCC Executive Director John Huebscher presented the testimony at a hearing of the Senate Committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs. He noted that for over a century the Catholic Church has addressed the rights of workers in modern industrial society according to the principles of Catholic social teaching.

"Ultimately, the value of work is grounded in the dignity of the human beings who do it," Huebscher testified. "Just as every life has value, so too does every worker have dignity. Wages are a critical way by which we recognize that dignity."

Huebscher also noted that there is a link between the right to a minimum wage and personal responsibility.

"Our rights are grounded in our responsibilities to ourselves and to others. Thus the right of every person to a job is grounded in the twin responsibility to develop, at a minimum, one's own God given skills to the fullest and to provide for one's own needs and those of one's family," he explained. "This is why Catholic social teaching has long defined a just wage in terms of a 'family wage', or that which is necessary to meet the needs of a family."

Huebscher added that the current economic downturn makes adjusting the minimum wage even more necessary.

"In this particular debate, we may hear we can't afford to raise the minimum wage in this troubled economy. But workers do not lose their dignity in a recession. Their obligation to care for their families and secure their own futures does not depend on the stock market," he argued.

"Nor does a recession relieve the rest of us from our moral obligation to assure a climate where just wages are possible. Rather, it is precisely at times like these that it is more important for us to honor our collective obligation to those who are economically vulnerable," he concluded.

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