



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Members, Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
Members, Assembly Committee on State Affairs and Government Operations

FROM: Barbara Sella, Associate Director

DATE: December 16, 2015

RE: Senate Bill 322 and Assembly Bill 460 - Compensating Wrongfully Imprisoned

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) supports Senate Bill 322 and Assembly Bill 460.

We support increasing state compensation for people who have been wrongly imprisoned because it accords well with the principles articulated by Wisconsin's Catholic bishops in their statement, *Public Safety, the Common Good, and the Church: A Statement on Crime and Punishment in Wisconsin*, namely respect for the human person, common good, concern for the poor and marginalized, restoration, and solidarity.

People who have been wrongly imprisoned have lost years of their lives that can never be returned to them. They deserve to be compensated generously so they can rebuild their lives, care for their loved ones, and fully participate in their communities.

The State has a responsibility to stand in solidarity with these innocent persons, as well as their surviving family members, not just for their sake, but also for the sake of the common good. For when the State acknowledges its error and attempts to make amends it reestablishes trust and legitimacy.

We also support provisions within SB 322 and AB 460 that recognize restoration of the exonerated should start immediately, through the provision of transitional services as well as health care coverage for up to ten years. Such coverage is essential to achieving and maintaining a stable and productive life.

Finally, we applaud this bipartisan effort to make our criminal justice system more just. We look forward to supporting further bipartisan reform efforts.

Thank you.