



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Members, Senate Committee on Labor and Government Reform

FROM: Barbara Sella, Associate Director

DATE: February 10, 2016

RE: Senate Bill 369 and Assembly Bill 450 – Immigration Status Inquiries

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) – the public policy voice for Wisconsin’s bishops – is providing this written testimony on Senate Bill 369 (and companion Assembly Bill 450) for information only.

The Catholic Church teaches that “Every migrant is a human person who, as such, possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance.” (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, #62) Alongside this respect for the fundamental human rights of immigrants, the Church also recognizes the legitimate right of governments to maintain public safety and control their borders. As the Church consistently teaches, these rights need not be opposed to one another, but rather they can and must complement one another. It is for this reason that the Catholic Church is a strong advocate of comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level.

In assessing Senate Bill 369 and Assembly Bill 450, which would prohibit so called “sanctuary cities,” the WCC recognizes that the bills do not mandate any immigration inquiries, nor do they limit the discretion of law enforcement. We also commend the authors’ amendment to limit the bill’s effect to status inquiries of persons who have been charged with a crime.

Nevertheless, we remain concerned that passing these bills could make law-abiding members of our state’s immigrant communities less likely to contact law enforcement if they are victims of or witnesses to criminal activity. Only criminals benefit when communities lose trust in the police.

We urge lawmakers, law enforcement, and immigrant advocates to work together for the common good, to provide clarity about what our laws do and do not require, and to foster good community relations. The WCC is committed to helping achieve these goals in every way possible.