



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

For Immediate Release

May 15, 2006

WCC Urges Governor to Veto Anti-Immigrant Bill

The WCC last week urged Governor Jim Doyle to veto Senate Bill 567, which would require that those receiving public benefits provide documentation of legal residency.

Under current state law, public assistance (BadgerCare, W-2, etc.) is limited to U.S. citizens and to those with satisfactory immigration status, but no documentary proof is required.

Under SB 567, anyone applying for public assistance would be required to show documentary proof of citizenship or legal residency. Moreover, anyone processing an application for public assistance would be required to attest in writing that he or she had seen such proof of citizenship or residency, or face a \$250 fine.

According to four separate audits of Department of Health and Family Services and Department of Workforce Development programs, illegal or fraudulent use of public assistance programs by undocumented immigrants is rare. At the same time, these audits revealed that requiring additional forms of documentation discourages people who are entitled to social services from applying in the first place.

As Executive Director John Huebscher wrote, "A significant number of those affected by SB 567 would be among our most vulnerable residents—elders, individuals with mental or emotional disabilities, and children. Some of these children were born in the US, but their parents were not, thus their parents will be more fearful of seeking help for their children."

"In addition," he continued, "we share the concerns voiced by others regarding the bill's impact on public health. Children and others who decline to seek immunization and health care services may in turn spread diseases that might otherwise be treated and checked. This will adversely affect the wider community."

"We do not endorse illegal immigration. But neither do we endorse laws that could deter many legal residents from seeking public benefits to which they have a rightful claim. In the interest of defending the dignity of human life and upholding the preferential love for the poor, we respectfully urge you to veto SB 567," Huebscher concluded.

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