



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

EYE ON THE CAPITOL
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**WOMEN BETTER SERVED BY
JUST WAGES, NOT ABORTION**
By John Huebscher, Executive Director

During the legislature's "busy season" it is not unusual for the Catholic Conference to weigh in on more than one issue on the same day. Wednesday, February 27th was such a day.

In the Senate, the Committee on Health, Human Services, Insurance and Job Creation held a public hearing on Senate Bill 398, a bill that repeals Wisconsin's law banning abortions. The law has gone unenforced since the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*. But the law remains significant for it would go back into force if and when the Supreme Court overturns its ruling in *Roe*.

Thus it was important for the WCC to oppose the bill and witness once more to the value and dignity of human life. As our Associate Director for Respect Life and Social Concerns, Barbara Sella, reminded the Committee, over the past century Wisconsin has led the nation in protecting the vulnerable from exploitation. She noted that a law protecting unborn children is part of that legacy.

Sella went on to remind the senators that abortion is most prevalent among young, poor, and unmarried women. She observed that Catholic teaching affirms that the solution to poverty and illegitimacy is not abortion, but love and responsibility, justice and solidarity. Women and their children deserve the right not only to a safe birth, but also to a safe and dignified life.

In this context, she argued, public policies should safeguard sufficient nutrition, housing, education, health care, and employment – rather than defending abortion.

A few yards away, another legislative committee heard testimony on Assembly Bill 274 to increase the minimum wage. The Catholic Conference submitted written testimony in support of that bill. In so doing, the WCC "walked the walk" in terms of offering women something more than abortion as a response to the challenges of raising a family.

The WCC's testimony recalled that 70 percent of the workers who would benefit from a hike in the minimum wage are adults. Indeed, nearly more than 90,000 of our state's children have parents who earn the minimum wage. Moreover, many minimum wage earners are employed in the service sector, especially in the retail trade, leisure, and hospitality industries. Most of these workers are women.

Clearly a bill to raise the minimum wage lacks the moral urgency of a bill intended to secure

access to abortion. But to the extent that a better wage offers a pregnant woman additional economic security for herself and her child, it gives her another reason to say "yes" to life for her child.

Too often, supporters of abortion rights accuse pro-life citizens of only caring about human life before it is born. They would do well to read the WCC's testimony against Senate Bill 398 and in favor of Assembly Bill 274.