

## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

### EYE ON THE CAPITOL

March 5, 2010

#### WCC AFFIRMS PARENTS AS PRIMARY EDUCATORS OF CHILDREN

By John Huebscher, Executive Director

*Family, Community and Participation* is an important theme of Catholic social teaching. This theme reminds us of our need to foster public policies that are “family friendly.”

Policies that affirm and support parents in their role as the primary educators of their children certainly fall into this category. In recent weeks, the WCC has given testimony on two proposals that offer such support to parents of school children.

One February 17<sup>th</sup>, the WCC offered written testimony in support of Senate Bill 86 as we did some months ago in support of its companion bill, Assembly Bill 116. These bills allow employees to take leave from work to attend a child’s day care or school activity.

Our testimony cited the teaching of Pope John Paul II in his 1981 encyclical letter, *On Human Work*.

In discussing the relationship between work and family, the Pope wrote that work itself should be “organized and adapted in such a way as to respect the requirements of the person, and his or her forms of life, above all life in the home” (#19).

A policy that makes it easier for parents to take leave for school activities is consistent with these values. When society adapts the workplace to make room for school visits, it makes a collective commitment to support parents in their role as primary educators.

WCC supported parents in another way two weeks later. On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Conference offered written testimony on behalf of Assembly Bill 726. (AB 726 also has a companion bill, Senate Bill 209). This bill allows individuals and corporations to claim a nonrefundable tax credit for charitable contributions made to public school academic and physical education programs and private school scholarship funds.

Tax credits of this sort strengthen our commitment to quality education in Wisconsin.

They foster investment in public schools. They also help families meet the costs of tuition and other expenses associated with attendance at private schools. In so doing, these bills render families more capable of choosing the institution that best meets a student’s educational needs. To the extent that families of limited means are unable to afford the expense of attending the school of their choice, the legislation can be especially helpful.

These proposals affirm that schools and parents are partners, dedicated to the common end of helping children grow into productive and informed citizens. The more we support parents in their choice of a school, and in their efforts to be present to their children in school, the more we help them achieve that end.

Parenting children is an imposing responsibility in the best of circumstances. When the demands of work and the burdens of a slow economy make parenting even more challenging, we can and should take extra steps to help mothers and fathers. These bills do that. They merit our support.

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