



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 29, 2007

FINANCE COMMITTEE HELPS POOR FAMILIES IN BUDGET

On May 22nd, the budget writing Joint Committee on Finance responded favorably to one of the highest budget priorities of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference by sustaining financial support for programs like the Wisconsin Works program (W-2) that target benefits and assistance to needy families. Protecting programs like W-2 is one of the four budget priorities advocated by WCC and those who attended the Catholics at the Capitol lobby day on March 13th.

The committee added over \$70 million to the budget to fill a gap in the programs that help working poor and other families obtain childcare (Wisconsin Shares) and other support services.

“The advocacy paid off,” commented WCC Executive Director John Huebscher. “We are grateful to all who supported this budget priority. We also thank the members of Joint Finance who collaborated across party lines to protect these programs.”

The panel also provided funding for the “Real Work, Real Pay Demonstration Project.” The Project will provide up to 100 individuals with real wages and work, a mentor to help them succeed, and a real possibility of maintaining their employment once the demonstration project’s six months are completed. WCC supported the project in memo to the Finance Committee on May 21st.

“Providing W-2 clients with real wages and real jobs not only would enable participants to gain a more realistic employment experience than is currently the case with many of job placements,” Huebscher wrote in the memo. “The policy will also confer greater dignity on the workers.”

In arguing for the Project, Huebscher noted that a similar program in Minnesota suggests that this type of employment experience has better outcomes for participants than existing job placements.

“The budget process is far from over. But those who advocated, lobbied, and voted on behalf of those in our communities who need help have made a difference so far. We need to build on that success,” Huebscher concluded.