



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: State Senator Jerry Petrowski, Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and
Military Affairs

FROM: Barbara Sella, Associate Director

DATE: January 21, 2014

RE: SB 492 – Human Trafficking

The WCC strongly supports Senate Bill 492 and Assembly Bill 620, which would strengthen Wisconsin's human trafficking laws, as well as protect the reputation, privacy, and civil liberties of Wisconsin residents.

Human trafficking constitutes one of the gravest offenses against the human family. It preys upon the most vulnerable women, children, and men who are frequently tricked or coerced into performing uncompensated work or degrading and dangerous activities. It denies everything that a civilized society stands for and that Catholic social teaching espouses: the protection of human dignity and human rights; the preferential option for the poor; the call to family and community; the rights of workers; and solidarity.

The Catholic Church, along with other religious and secular institutions, has been involved in combating human trafficking both nationally and internationally for some time. In the U.S., the Catholic Coalition Against Human Trafficking, which consists of about twenty Catholic organizations, was one of the groups that helped draft the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and its subsequent reauthorizations.

This past December, Pope Francis addressed the issue of human trafficking in a speech for new ambassadors to the Vatican:

Human trafficking is a crime against humanity. We must unite our efforts to free the victims and stop this increasingly aggressive crime which threatens not only individuals but the basic values of society and of international security and justice, to say nothing of the economy, and the fabric of the family and our coexistence.

What is called for, then, is a shared sense of responsibility and firmer political will to gain victory on this front. Responsibility is required towards those who have fallen victim to trafficking in order to protect their rights, to guarantee their safety and that of their families, and to prevent the corrupt and criminals from

escaping justice and having the last word over the lives of others. Suitable legislative intervention in the countries of origin, transit and arrival, which will also facilitate orderly migration, can diminish this grave problem. (December 12, 2013)

The WCC, therefore, applauds Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen and the sponsors of Senate Bill 492 and Assembly Bill 620 for taking this legislative action. We strongly urge the Committee to pass these bills.