



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Senator Robert Jauch, Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Children and Families and Workforce Development

FROM: Kim Wadas, Associate Director, Education and Health Care

DATE: February 17, 2010

RE: Senate Bill 86, School Conference and Activities Leave

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference urges your support for Senate Bill 86, which allows employees to take leave from work to attend a child's day care or school function.

By allowing parents the flexibility to attend important school functions and to play a direct role in the daily instruction of their children, SB 86 would facilitate an essential element of successful education, parental involvement. In his 1981 encyclical letter, *On Human Work*, Pope John Paul II discussed the relationship between work and family life at some length. In his discussion the Pope said the following:

These two spheres of values – one linked to work and the other consequent on the family nature of human life – must be properly united and must properly permeate each other... Two aspects of work in a sense come into play here: the one making family life and its upkeep possible, and the second making possible the achievement of the purposes of the family, especially education (#11).

The Pope continued by stating 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).

These ideas are echoed by the Catholic bishops of the United States in their pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, and in their 1992 statement, “Putting Children and Families First.” The American bishops have emphasized that the true measure of an economy is not just what it produces, but whether or not it protects human dignity and promotes family life. Giving employees time off to attend to their children's educational needs does just that.

As the bishops reflected in *Economic Justice for All*, “economic and social policies of the work world should be continually evaluated in light of their impact on the strength and stability of family life” (#93). The well-being of families is a proper concern for government and public authorities. In several ways, the political community has a duty to honor the family, to assist it,

and to ensure that a variety of goods are available to families in order to meet their responsibilities to one another and the broader community.

SB 86 is consistent with these values. It affirms and encourages parents to be more involved in the education of their children by being present at school for significant events in the educational life of their child. By restructuring the workplace to make room for school visits, the bill represents a commitment by the rest of us as "indirect employers" to support parents in their roles as primary educators.

By allowing parents to attend and participate in school and day care activities, we affirm our commitment to make the family an integral part of education in the State of Wisconsin.

The WCC urges your support for SB 86.