



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

### EYE ON THE CAPITOL

March 28, 2023

### CATHOLIC ADVOCACY ON STATE BUDGET

By Barbara Sella, Executive Director

At the beginning of every session, the Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the state's Catholic bishops, offers legislators and the public a list of public policy positions and a list of priorities for the upcoming state budget.

Both documents are based on the principles of Catholic social teaching (CST), which is the fruit of over 2,000 years of observation and reflection on the part of the Church. The WCC's perspective and work is also informed by the Catholic Church extensive institutional experience in running schools, universities, charities, hospitals, and other organizations that serve the common good.

As the Wisconsin bishops wrote this past August, the principles of CST “provide a moral framework that does not easily fit liberal or conservative ideologies or political party platforms. They are nonpartisan and nonsectarian, reflecting fundamental ethical principles that are common to all people.”

This session's [2023 Public Policy Positions](#) and [2023-2025 State Budget Issue Brief](#), which are available on the WCC's website, have a special focus.

At this moment in our state's history, following the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, it is imperative that lawmakers prioritize the well-being of women, children, and families. The WCC's *2023-2025 State Budget Issue Brief* includes the following:

- Extend the postpartum eligibility for women in the Medicaid program to 12 months.
- Expand the Family Foundations Home Visiting Program.
- Provide grants to reduce infant and maternal mortality which will help to address racial disparities.
- Create a sales tax exemption for diapers, breastfeeding equipment, and feminine hygiene products.
- Increase the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for families with one and two children.
- Support affordable childcare and sustain childcare providers.
- Create a tax credit for qualified adoption expenses.
- Support housing and wraparound services for survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking.
- Eliminate fiscal cliffs and marriage penalties in state assistance programs.

In addition to these budget priorities, the WCC is asking lawmakers to give immigrants greater opportunities, to increase efforts to rehabilitate, educate, and reintegrate those in our criminal justice system, and to improve quality and affordable education, health care, transportation, housing, clean water, and more.

Promoting the common good and protecting every individual from conception until natural death can sometimes seem daunting. Politics can seem like a zero-sum game in which extremists in both parties control the political process. However, if citizens remain reasonable, engaged, and persistent, especially between elections, change is possible. Most, if not all, of the WCC's priorities can be implemented through bipartisan legislation. What's needed is citizens who are willing to contact their elected officials and push for these priorities.

The bishops of Wisconsin urge all Catholics to read the *2023 Public Policy Positions* and *2023-2025 State Budget Issue Brief* and to pick one or more policies that speak to their heart. Then, take the next step and commit to advocating for this policy for years, if necessary. Encourage like-minded friends and family to join. A persuasive visit, letter, or phone call to a legislator can have a tremendous impact.

The Legislature's Joint Finance Committee (JFC) will be holding four budget listening sessions across the state in April to hear from citizens about their hopes for the state budget. Consider attending and bringing the WCC's priorities to the JFC's attention or submit your comments in writing. To find locations, times, and writing instructions, see the WCC's March 13, 2023, *Capitol Update* at [wisconsinatholic.org/advocacy-network](https://www.wisconsinatholic.org/advocacy-network), where you can also subscribe to receive current information about legislation and the WCC's advocacy work.

To contact your representatives, visit the Wisconsin State Legislature website at [legis.wisconsin.gov](https://legis.wisconsin.gov) and use the *Find Your Legislator* tool, or call the State Legislative Hotline at 1-800-362-9472.

For more information on how to advocate effectively or to invite a member of the WCC staff to speak in your parish, email [office@wisconsinatholic.org](mailto:office@wisconsinatholic.org).

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