



Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops

The purpose of this correspondence is to give you an update on some of the activities of the LCCB at the **mid-way point of the 2022 session**. We continued to work to implement the LCCB priority agenda for the 2022 Session. We continued to apply principles of Catholic Social Teaching concerning the Life and Dignity of the Human Person, Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, Solidarity and Care for Our Common Home.

In terms of **securing sustainability funding** for our three **intermediate care facilities** in the state, some funding was included in HB 1 but not enough. We have work to do in the Senate side. Lee Eagan has been a long-time tireless worker and he has arranged meetings with key legislators.

LCCB continued its strong stance to reduce abortions by supporting SB 388 which will **prohibit the on-line sales of abortion inducing drugs**. The bill will be amended to provide more clarity on its intended impact. We continued to **improve the adoption process** by requiring all parties to follow best practices as done by our Catholic Charities Adoption agencies. Rep. Owen's HB 450 would **allow access to an adopted person's original birth certificate** has moved out of the House side.

We did work closely with Fr. Jose Lavastida, Franciscan Missionaries OLHS and coordination with the National Catholic Bioethics Center to draft **amendment language to HB 520 for emergency contraception** for women who have been raped that aligns with the Ethical and Religious Directives. In addition, we were able to add a **religious exemption** to HB 537 that **requires insurance coverage for IVF treatments**.

LCCB took a strong stance and testified to **end the use of the death penalty**. Despite coordinated Catholic and faith-based efforts, SB 294 by Senator Jackson, failed in Committee by a 4-1 vote. There is a remaining HB 106 by Representative Kyle Green Jr. that is pending in the House Administration on Criminal Justice.

We continued to advocate to **reduce the impacts of human trafficking** and apply restorative justice principles to those who have been trafficked. SB 115 improves the training of officers involved in making arrests and SB 148 will provide post-conviction relief for those who have been trafficked but were convicted of prostitution.

We supported HB 459 **Life Sustaining Act** to give patients and families more control of decisions at the end of life and for the ability to transfer to another facility, if necessary, that will respect their decisions.

The LCCB took a very strong and consistent stance to provide **reasonable gun control measures**. LCCB testified against HB 37 which would allow permit-less carry without any training. This is a dignity of life issue, however, it passed out of committee.

We were not successful in supporting two **environmental justice** bills, SB 20 and SB 65, aimed at more transparency in communication and reporting to the public on toxins

released in our communities. LCCB will continue to advocate to take **Care of Our Common Home**.

We supported a bill to put on the **ballot a measure to increase the minimum wage to \$10.25** per hour. Arkansas did this very successfully. The bill failed along with several other minimum wage bills. In addition, we supported an **Equal Pay for Women** bill which failed as well. LCCB was able to briefly put in a white card, for information only, where I briefly outlined the development and **church teaching on a family sustaining wage**. None of the bills got out of committee.

We continued to oppose HB 4 which would **eliminate our non-public school appointee to the BESE Board**. It has passed the House Committee, with little opposition, and now heads to the House Chamber. We have testified twice to no avail. We are hoping to stop this in the House Chamber or Senate Committee.

LCCB worked with Catholic Schools to **amend a bill that requires a policy for bullying that included financial penalties**. The bill had financial penalties which the author agreed to remove. We are continuing to monitor and possibly add more amendments. Catholic School Nutrition programs are extremely concerned about HB 986 which would **move toward privatizing the school lunch programs**. Catholic Schools fear this could be very harmful to our school lunch programs and staff.

LCCB is monitoring closely HB 47 Rep. Edmonds which would **require non-public schools to accept a parent's dissent letter for vaccinations**. Our interpretation is that private schools can still decide if the child should be accepted. Rep. Edmonston is aware of our concerns but the bill passed out of Committee.

There will continue to be a large debate on **Education Savings Accounts** which involves allowing \$5400 of funding to be used for children from public schools who are reading below 3rd grade level, being bullied, have exceptionalities and enroll **them in private schools**. This could have impact on our Catholic Schools and we are monitoring closely.

We advocated to include funding from the surplus and the American Rescue Plan for **poverty alleviation programs** and to look wholistically at the social determinants of health that contribute to poverty. We are not confident that any funding will be allocated.

In conclusion, the challenges remain to push back on the attempted privatization of the school lunch program, secure funding for our intermediate care facilities, testifying again against permit-less carry for guns, and discerning the potential for Education Savings Accounts to assist our Catholic Schools.