



Testimony of Mr. Jason Adkins, Esq., Executive Director

House Health and Human Services Policy Committee

March 19, 2013

H.F. 256: “Family Cap” Repeal

The Minnesota Catholic Conference (MCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Minnesota, supports H.F. 256 (Fritz), the repeal of the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) “Family Cap,” Minn. Stat. § 256J.24, subd. 6 (2012). MCC supports human services programs such as MFIP that aid low-income families with children. But by withholding cash assistance from MFIP-eligible families with newborns, the Family Cap directly harms children—children who are not responsible for the acts of the adults in their lives.

Low-income families expecting another child are subject to a particularly vulnerable situation in which they need the security of providing for a newborn while still seeking employment. The MFIP program addresses this need by continuing to aid the family in seeking employment and providing an extra food benefit for the child. The Family Cap, however, denies the cash portion for the additional child, thus furthering the family’s economic instability and hindering the efforts of the program as a whole.

In December 2011, there were an estimated 3,149 families with “capped” children, accounting for 16.2% of the total number of MFIP cases that month.ⁱ In a family with a “capped” child, the Family Cap withholds anywhere between \$52 and \$95 per month, depending on the size of the family. For a family of three receiving a cash portion of \$532 per month, this withheld amount is significant and places undue financial pressure on women who are expecting another child.ⁱⁱ

The Family Cap does not work. It has not reduced the number of babies being born to MFIP-recipient families (its original goal), or reduced family size.ⁱⁱⁱ MFIP families are still having children, and because of the Family Cap, those children are being born into even deeper poverty.

Moreover, the Family Cap creates an incentive for women to abort their babies in order to avert the impending economic hardship. Though it is difficult to show direct causation, there is at least a notable correlation between economic-related abortion rates and the 2003 enactment of the Family Cap. Since 2002, the rate of abortions in Minnesota performed for economic reasons has doubled, even though the general abortion rate has decreased. In 2011, 34 percent of abortions were due to economic reasons.^{iv} In 2002, abortions procured for economic reasons accounted for only 17 percent of abortions.^v

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MCC supports the MFIP program's goals of assisting low-income families, fostering employment, and facilitating financial stability and independence. However, MCC cannot support the Family Cap due to the pressure it places on low-income mothers to abort.

In advocating both a fundamental respect for human life as well as encouraging welfare programs that promote work and an option for the poor and vulnerable, the MCC supports the repeal of the MFIP Family Cap.

ⁱ Transition to Economic Stability Div. Minn. Dep't of Human Services, *Minnesota Family Investment Program and the Divisionary Work Program: Characteristics of December 2011 Cases and Eligible Adults*, 1, 25, Table 5 (2012), <http://archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/2012/other/120697.pdf>; See also CDF, *Minnesota's Invisible Children: Children in Families Receiving MFIP*, 3 (2011), <http://www.cdf-mn.org/sites/publications-2011/minnesotas-invisible.pdf> (1 in 7 families has a "capped" child each month).

ⁱⁱ CDF, *supra* note i, at 4; See also The Research Dep't of the Minn. House of Rep., *Minnesota Family Assistance: A Guide to Public Programs Providing Assistance to Minnesota Families*, 1, 33 (2012), <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/pubs/famasst.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ CDF, *supra* note i, at 3.

^{iv} In 2011, 3,796 of 11,071 total abortions were due to economic reasons. Minn. Dep't of Health, *Induced Abortions in Minnesota January – December 2011: Report to the Legislature* (2012), <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/abrpt/2011abrpt.pdf>.

^v In 2002, 2,546 of 14,186 total abortions were due to economic reasons. Minn. Dep't of Health, *Induced Abortions in Minnesota January – December 2002: Report to the Legislature*, (2003), <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/abrpt/abrpt02.pdf>.