



April 22, 2014

Dear Legislator:

The Minnesota Catholic Conference (MCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Minnesota, wishes to ensure that women have access to a workplace that supports family economic security and motherhood, and this act is an important step towards those goals. We are grateful to those who have moved this legislation forward and would like to offer our support for three provisions of S.F. 2050 in particular, Article 3 section 2, Article 3 section 4, and Article 3 section 6.

The Catholic Church insists that women have unique gifts to offer society that contribute to the growth of a healthy culture, and ensuring the participation of women in the public sphere is a valuable part of this growth (Centesimus annus 11; Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church 295). Simultaneously, we also need to acknowledge that women also have a biological capacity to bear children and with that the responsibility to care for and raise those children. Therefore, a woman's public role or profession needs to harmonize with- and not dominate- her role as a mother and a caretaker.

Pope Francis recently asked: "How is it possible for women to increase their effective presence in many contexts within the public sphere, in the world of work and in places where the most important decisions are made, and at the same time maintaining their presence and preferential and entirely special attention in and for the family?"

This will come about more easily if we as a society can re-conceptualize the meaning of care taking work in the home. Studies have shown that women who are mothers prefer to work part-time, in flexible work environments, or stay home full time for at least some of their child's formative years. Therefore, we would also applaud more comprehensive efforts to foster women's economic security by compensating women who work in their homes as caregivers. This could be done, for example, with small tax breaks for care-givers and credit given towards future retirement benefits.

Still, we need to support all mothers, even those who are compelled to work for any number of reasons, including financial hardship or their status as single parents. They need to be supported in their decision to take on the responsibilities of motherhood, regardless of their work status and economic conditions. Parenthood is a beautiful gift and great sacrifice that must be encouraged, not made harder by unnecessary economic and professional burdens.

Three provisions of this Act, in particular, provide important assistance to women and families as they struggle to balance their role as parents, the needs of their children, and their workplace goals and professional responsibilities. First, this Act expands unpaid parenting leave from 6 to 12 weeks and allows for greater pregnancy accommodations to be given for conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth. Second, it increases enforcement of existing workplace protections for nursing mothers. Third, it allows earned paid sick and safe leave to cover medical needs and care of family members.

Testimony of Kathryn Mollen, J.D.

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In conclusion, we are encouraged by this initiative to foster women's economic security and look forward to participating in further legislative initiatives that advance the dignity of women and foster greater economic security. Thank you for your consideration.



Kathryn Mollen, J.D.

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