



May 24, 2021

Gov. Tim Walz & Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Paul Gazelka, Majority Leader
3113 Senate Office Building
95 University Ave. W.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman
463 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear State Leaders:

Peace be with you. As you continue your negotiations toward a special session, we write to highlight some important legislative proposals that should be passed this year that will uphold human dignity and promote the common good.

The Catholic Church advocates for public policies that show a “preferential option for the poor and vulnerable.” In other words, politics—the great conversation about how we order our life together—should focus first on meeting the needs of the least of those among us (cf. Matthew 25). There are many important matters being debated this year, but we hope that you will give the following items special consideration in your negotiations.

Providing greater school choice is a key civil rights issue of our time and a moral imperative. Education is a ladder out of poverty. We know of the achievement gaps that persist in our state, but COVID has also highlighted the need to help more parents find better educational opportunities for their kids when public schools, for a variety of reasons, may not be serving their needs. It is universally acknowledged that students from low-income families suffered the most from the response to COVID-19.

We hope that you will be bold enough to **create educational savings accounts** (S.F. 1525/H.F. 1528) for parents who wish to customize their child’s education. We believe all families deserve this opportunity, but a modest proposal targeted specifically at very low-income families to **expand the already existing refundable K-12 tax credit to include tuition** (S.F. 1153/H.F. 153) would be another great place to start.

475 University Avenue W.
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55103

Tel: 651-227-8777
Fax: 651-227-2675
www.MNCatholic.org

ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL AND MINNEAPOLIS ♦ DIOCESE OF CROOKSTON ♦ DIOCESE OF DULUTH
DIOCESE OF NEW ULM ♦ DIOCESE OF SAINT CLOUD ♦ DIOCESE OF WINONA-ROCHESTER

Additionally, low-income families have struggled mightily to hold their households together during COVID-19. Workers need **earned sick and safe time** (S.F. 29/H.F. 7) to ensure they can take the time they need to recover, or care for loved ones, without fear of repercussions or losing their job. And when it is difficult to make ends meet, they should be **protected from predatory payday loans** (S.F. 892/H.F. 102) that could put them further into a debt trap.

Likewise, our justice system sometimes criminalizes poverty, exacerbating racial disparities. One meaningful fix to avoid pushing people further into economic hardship is to **enact driver's license suspension reform** (S.F. 432/H.F. 336). People should not lose access to their livelihoods and should be able to provide for their family as they work to pay off fines and fees.

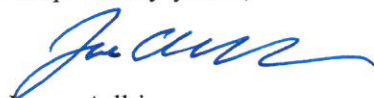
The poorest among us need an adequate safety net and the necessary services available to protect their well-being and dignity. Access to healthcare and shelter are basic human rights. Therefore, we propose that the State continue to partner with organizations such as Catholic Charities that **provide shelter assistance and related services** to the homeless population (S.F. 455/H.F. 315).

Similarly, vulnerable new mothers need ongoing maternal and psychological care postpartum. This is good for mom, as well as for newborns to receive the best start possible. There seems to be consensus in the Legislature to **expand state medical assistance to provide at least six months' coverage for postpartum women** (S.F. 735/H.F. 521). Please include MA expansion in the HHS funding package.

Finally, our immigrant brothers and sisters are our friends, co-workers, and neighbors. Refusing them a driver's license while Congress fails to enact meaningful immigration reform pushes them to the shadows of our society and harms the common good. Minnesota does not have to wait to help the immigrant community and ensure its roads are safe. **Driver's licenses should be available to undocumented persons** (S.F. 1354/H.F. 1163) so that they can be properly trained, insured, and able to help their families get to work, school, and worship.

We appreciate your consideration of these policies that impact our state's most vulnerable residents. We are grateful for your service and the sacrifice made by you and your families. Please know of the prayers of the Catholic community as you work to uphold the common good.

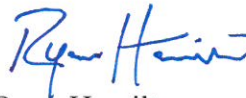
Respectfully yours,



Jason Adkins

Executive Director

jadkins@mncatholic.org



Ryan Hamilton

Government Relations Associate

rhamilton@mncatholic.org

CC: Rep. Ryan Winkler, Majority Leader
Rep. Kurt Daudt, Minority Leader
Senator Susan Kent, Minority Leader