

CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO

Interested Party Testimony: HB 27

Opposed to the provision denying workers' compensation to undocumented workers June 13, 2017

Thank you Chairman Hottinger, Vice-Chairman Hackett, Ranking Minority Member Brown, and members of the Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee. My name is Jim Tobin. I am an Associate Director with the Catholic Conference of Ohio. The Catholic community, like so many other faith communities across the state, has many shared experiences with immigrant families throughout Ohio. The Catholic Bishops of Ohio are opposed to the denial of workers' compensation benefits to undocumented workers.

The Catholic Church has consistently called for meaningful immigration reform. As recently as this past April, the Catholic Bishops of Ohio sent a letter to Congress calling upon elected officials to address our country's broken immigration system through the enactment of comprehensive reform that improves security and creates more legal and transparent paths to immigration.

The Catholic Bishops of Ohio do not condone unauthorized entry into the United States. Yet, once undocumented immigrants are here and working, their human dignity itself should guarantee basic compensation and protections for the work they provide.

In our Catholic teaching, work is first and foremost the very expression of the human person in the world and participation in God's creation. When someone engages in work for an employer, that person should receive just remuneration and just worker protections. Respecting a person's human dignity should remain paramount. (*Pope St. John Paul II, Laborem Exercens, nos. 6, 19, 23*)

Workers' compensation is an insurance policy that the employer pays in recognition of the worker's labor. It provides medical and compensation benefits for work-related injuries, diseases and deaths. It should be available to all workers regardless of their legal status. Denying workers' compensation to undocumented workers may result in more abuses by unscrupulous employers to this already often exploited population.

We encourage you to remove this provision from HB 27. Thank you for this opportunity.