



**Proponent Testimony HB 7
House Finance Committee
Catholic Conference of Ohio
October 4, 2023**

Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Will Kuehnle, and I am an associate director of the Catholic Conference of Ohio. The Catholic Conference is the official voice of the Catholic Church in Ohio on matters of public policy, and we are pleased to support House Bill 7, known as the Strong Foundations Act.

The Strong Foundations Act provides comprehensive support for pregnant women and their children through pregnancy into infancy. HB 7's investment in the Healthy Beginnings at Home program resonates strongly with the Catholic Church's commitment to solidarity with vulnerable women and preborn children. The proven benefits of the Healthy Beginnings at Home program speak for themselves. At the time of birth, the Strong Foundations Act expands the qualification for Help Me Grow Home Visiting and Early Intervention, so that families of children born before 37 weeks are provided the resources and compassion that we owe to all children, regardless of their stage of development.

The Catholic Conference recognizes the prudence of the Strong Foundations Act and urges its passage for this reason. According to the Catholic faith, the virtue of prudence is found in doing the right thing at the right time. The programs included in HB 7 bring aid to struggling mothers and children at a critical moment in their lives, and this prudence is rewarded in the reduction in infant mortality and Medicaid expenses seen in the Healthy Beginnings at Home pilot. The Strong Foundations Act is a supremely prudent piece of legislation.

Through our Catholic Charities and programs like Walking with Moms in Need, the Catholic Church accompanies women, children, and families, offering solidarity and material support. However, no single element of our social order can bear the obligation we all share to support the disadvantaged. For this reason, the Catholic Conference is glad to support HB 7, out of a moral conviction that we must support the struggling mothers and children in our midst.

The Catholic Church's commitment to life is well known. In HB 7, the Strong Foundations Act, we see a supremely pro-life piece of legislation, which we are pleased to support this bill and ask for your support as well.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.