



**Proponent Testimony SB 242  
Catholic Conference of Ohio  
Senate Ways and Means Committee  
June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

Chair Blessing, Vice Chair Roegner, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony today. My name is Will Kuehnle, and I am an associate director with 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 Senate Bill 242, which would expand the charitable use property tax exemption.

Currently, the Ohio Revised Code separately permits exemptions from property tax for charitable and religious institutions. These exemptions acknowledge the manifold public goods that these organizations provide, especially to those most in need. Catholic churches and charitable organizations serve the least of our brothers and sisters out of a conviction that we serve Jesus Christ when we feed the hungry or clothe the naked. Our public policies recognize that the resulting public benefit justifies an exemption from property tax so that religious and charitable institutions, including those affiliated with the Catholic faith, can more readily fulfill their philanthropic mission.

However, the Revised Code contains an inexplicable gap with respect to property taxation when exempted entities, including Catholic parishes and charities, enter a lease agreement. Despite the exemption from property tax enjoyed when a charitable organization leases from another charitable organization, a political subdivision, or an educational institution, this exemption does not apply when a charity leases property from a religious institution. In other words, a Catholic parish using an attached hall for food and clothing drives is exempted from property tax; however, if that parish leases the hall to a Catholic charity serving the same community with a food and clothing bank, a property tax would be levied on the leased property. This not only presents a financial burden, but this peculiarity seems out of step with the intent of the law with respect to property taxation.

We thank Sen. O'Brien for her assistance on this legislation. SB 242, the product of her attention to our concern, will empower Ohio's religious communities, including the Catholic Church, to better serve those in need through partnerships with charitable institutions. This change more faithfully reflects the purpose of existing property tax policies and incentivizes wider cooperation between religious and charitable institutions, including those affiliated with the Catholic Church and other faith traditions.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony. I am happy to answer your questions.