

CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO

May 6, 2021

SB 17: Opponent Testimony

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Minority Member Craig and members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee, my name is Jim Tobin. I am an associate director for the Catholic Conference of Ohio. The Conference represents the public policy concerns of all the Catholic Bishops throughout Ohio.

While our dioceses, parishes, schools, and social services agencies provide many services that help the poor and vulnerable, fair, effective, easily accessible, and well-funded public assistance programs are vitally important. Working together, our priority focus should be on those most in need—the poor, the vulnerable, and people on the margins—to offer them hope and assistance in desperate circumstances and in difficult times.

Senate Bill 17 includes numerous provisions which will impact eligibility, work requirements, and accountability measures for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Medicaid programs. We affirm SB 17's intent to address the integrity of Ohio's public assistance programs. Our concerns center around unintended consequences, implementational concerns, and timing questions.

Many of the provisions create too many barriers for children, families, working adults and seniors to get the help they need. The provisions requiring more frequent reporting, more stringent work requirements, increased case management, and technological changes (such as pictures on SNAP cards) will burden the already overly stretched and under-staffed State and County Departments of Jobs and Family Services. We also question the timing for such changes while so many Ohioans are still reeling from the COVID crisis.

We encourage amendments to this bill that will provide sufficient monetary, staffing, and other resources to implement new requirements; longer phase-in periods; and, most importantly, changes that make it easier--rather than more difficult-- for those in need to access services.

Thank you for this consideration.