



**Opponent Testimony HB 451
House Ways and Means Committee
Catholic Conference of Ohio
June 4th, 2024**

Chair Roemer, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide opponent testimony. 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.

The Catholic Church has long called for public policies that protect our communities from human trafficking and the movement of illegal drugs. Stopping these evil practices remains an advocacy priority worldwide while the local Church works to address the root causes that often correlate with human trafficking and drug smuggling. As the Archbishop of Cincinnati recently wrote, “Our nation’s migration and border policies fail us. For decades, the U.S. Catholic bishops have urged Congress and administrations of both parties to revamp immigration law and processes in a way that restores order and promotes human dignity. To be clear, this does **not** mean that we condone unlawful immigration or advocate for open borders. However, in the midst of a broken system and broken world, we **do** always advocate for every person’s God-given dignity.”

HB 451 puts onerous restrictions on legal residents of Ohio and threatens their support of loved ones stuck in cycles of poverty and violence. Legal residents of Ohio support friends and families in foreign nations through money transfers. Through these small and consistent payments sent to their hometowns, legal residents of Ohio provide vital aid to family members in their countries of origin. Humanitarian parolees from Haiti, refugees from Ukraine, those legally seeking asylum from Cuba; thousands of men and women legally residing in Ohio send critical support to those suffering from poverty and violence. For their families around the world, these small remittances are the difference between survival and starvation.

Remittances are already expensive due to currency conversion and transfer fees. HB 451 imposes a 7% fee on money transfers from a customer in Ohio to a person outside the United States. Our concern is the authorization HB 451 grants to the money transmitter to pass this fee to its customers, effectively doubling existing fees. This additional burden will make it considerably more difficult for the legal residents of Ohio to send needful assistance to their loved ones in need. Tax credits after the fact are not sufficient when calculating how much support to send home.

Many native-born Ohioans and immigrants recognize their responsibility to assist their suffering neighbors around the world. This is a fundamentally Christian impulse and obligation. Insofar as HB 451 burdens Ohioans seeking to fulfill their responsibility to care for their poor brothers and sisters, the Catholic Conference opposes this legislation.

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