



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland

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Comments of Suzanne Lafreniere, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese

Written testimony in support of LD 336

An Act To Amend the Requirements of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program

Senator Brakey, Representative Hymanson, and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Health and Human Services, my name is Suzanne Lafreniere and I represent the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland in support of LD 336. The Diocese has a population of over 279,000 Catholics* or one-fifth of the total population of the state of Maine. In addition to its 141 churches organized into 55 parishes, it has 10 elementary schools, one private elementary school, one diocesan high school and one private high school. It also includes one Catholic college, Saint Joseph's College of Maine in Standish.

The reason why the Diocese supports this bill is two-fold. First, As Pope Francis has said, "The family is the foundation of co-existence and a remedy against social fragmentation. Children have a right to grow up in a family with a father and a mother capable of creating a suitable environment for the child's development and emotional maturity."¹ Often times due to difficult circumstances, the family is split however we should not continue with a policy that discourages parental involvement with their children.

During the fall of 2015 I was lucky enough to go to DC when the Holy Father, Pope Francis was visiting. While he was here, Pope Francis said a society is not "healthy" if it does not support families and added, "We cannot think that a society has a future when it fails to pass laws capable of protecting families and ensuring their basic needs, especially those of families just starting out."

The second reason the Diocese supports is due to the special housing allowance. Housing costs should not prevent a family from meeting other basic needs. What a difficult choice it must be for a parent to have to choose between food, housing, healthcare and/or transportation to work.

I urge you to vote this Ought to Pass. Thank you for your time and consideration today.

*www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/maine/

¹. – Humanum Conference, November 17, 2014