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BISHOPS' STATEMENT ON MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

DATE: June 20, 2006

The Massachusetts Legislature is considering legislation to increase the state's minimum wage. House 4781, An Act Relative to the Minimum Wage, is scheduled to be debated in the House of Representatives on June 21st.

The Senate has passed an amendment to its version of the budget which provides for a minimum wage increase. The House budget did not include a similar provision. The Senate amendment is now before the Senate/House Budget Conference Committee.

The last increase in the state minimum wage to \$6.75 took place in 1999. Since that time, inflation has eroded the current minimum wage value by six percent.

Increasing the state's minimum wage affirms the dignity of work and the basic rights of workers. More low-income workers will be able to improve their own and their family's quality of life. A paycheck is more than just an issue of money—just pay for honest work contributes to human dignity and serves the common good. The Catholic Church has long recognized that the adequacy of wage levels should be determined by taking many social factors into account, extending beyond the individual interests of employer and employee. In addition, adjusting the wage minimum is only one of many tools that should be used to broaden economic opportunities and secure social well-being. Though more should be done to help low-income citizens break out of poverty, the efforts in the state legislature to raise the minimum wage in the Commonwealth have our support and an increase deserves to be enacted.

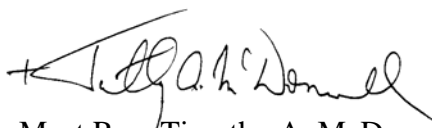
The Massachusetts Catholic Conference is the public policy office of the Roman Catholic Bishops in the Commonwealth, representing the Archdiocese of Boston and the Dioceses of Fall River, Springfield, and Worcester.



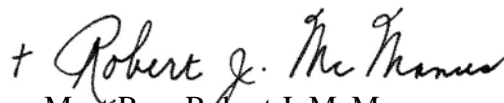
Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley
Archbishop, Archdiocese of Boston



Most Rev. George W. Coleman
Bishop, Diocese of Fall River



Most Rev. Timothy A. McDonnell
Bishop, Diocese of Springfield



Most Rev. Robert J. McManus
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