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**LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY**

To: Members of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development  
From: Edward F. Saunders, Jr., Esq., Executive Director  
Re: House 149, An Act Relative to Illegal Immigration  
Date: February 13, 2008

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference (“Conference”) respectfully submits this testimony in opposition to House 149, “An Act Relative to Illegal Immigration.” The bill mandates the closure for a thirty day period of any business in the Commonwealth found to be employing “illegal immigrants.”

Of initial concern, the bill fails to specify which state or local authority is responsible for enforcing the mandate, and offers no definitions of key terms such as “illegal immigrant.” Beyond its drafting deficiencies, however, the bill poses more serious problems.

The bill takes a simplistic, punitive approach to a complex issue, illegal immigration, which is international in scope. The bill not only would harshly interfere with the well-being of an offending employer’s undocumented workers and their families, but it also would similarly hurt the employer’s legal workers and their families by closing the workplace doors to all employees. In addition, by authorizing the shutting down of businesses that contribute to the local and state economy, the bill would have far-reaching economic consequences. Many innocent people would suffer as a result of the bill’s draconian design.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Catholic Church’s teaching recognize and support the right of a sovereign government to secure its borders and protect its citizens. However, as stated in testimony before Congress by Bishop Gerald Barnes, Chairman of the Committee on Migration of the USCCB (July 26, 2005), available at <http://www.usccb.org/mrs/senatejudiciary.shtml>, immigration policy should be “targeted,” “proportional,” and “humane.”

“Targeted” to ensure that only those who are dangerous are more easily identified and apprehended.  
“Proportional” to ensure that enforcement does not feature unnecessary force or penalties. “Humane” to ensure that the human rights and dignity of immigrants and their families are preserved and respected to the greatest possible extent. House 149 satisfies none of these conditions.

For these reasons, the Conference urges the Committee to give House 149 an unfavorable report recommending that the bill ought not pass.

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.