

**MASSACHUSETTS CATHOLIC CONFERENCE  
WEST END PLACE**

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**LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY**

To: Members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary  
From: Edward F. Saunders, Jr., Esq., Executive Director  
Re: House 1484, "An Act Relative to Provide Certain Information to Victims of Domestic Violence"  
Date: July 14, 2009

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference ("Conference") respectfully submits this testimony in support of House Bill 1484, "An Act to Provide Certain Information to Victims of Domestic Violence." This bill would require police officers in Massachusetts to hand an informational pamphlet to an individual experiencing domestic violence. The bill requires the pamphlet to include the following information:

- The name, address and phone number of at least three shelters within the area which provide services to victims of domestic abuse;
- The name, address and phone number of at least three domestic violence programs within the area which provide counseling services to batterers;
- The name, address and phone number of at least three programs within the area which provide drug and alcohol counseling services;
- The name, address and phone number of a domestic violence hotline and/or legal services;
- An explanation of a 209A restraining order and of victim compensation.

To assist those with reading difficulties, each resource with a phone number would be accompanied by a descriptive picture that represents the service offered by the agency.

Any form of violence—physical, sexual, psychological, verbal or economic—is unacceptable. In Massachusetts too many women, men, children, elderly and unborn residents are experiencing familiar violence. To help alleviate this problem, churches, schools, Catholic Charities, and other organizations offer counseling, safe shelter, and assistance to all members of the family. In most instances, victims of violence do not know how or where to access this help.

Having law enforcement officials, who in most cases of domestic violence are the first responders, leave with the victim a pamphlet containing contact information for help and resources would go a long way in providing assistance to individuals at a time when it is most needed. The Conference supports legislation to make information on how to access these resources more readily available throughout the Commonwealth.

For these reasons, the Conference urges the Committee to give House 1484 a favorable report recommending that the bill ought to 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.