

**MASSACHUSETTS CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
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LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

To: Members of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities
From: Edward F. Saunders, Jr., Esq., Executive Director
Re: Senate 66, "An Act to Enhance Opportunities for Housing Among Recipients of Transitional Assistance"
Date: September 15, 2009

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference ("Conference") respectfully submits this testimony in support of Senate 66, "An Act to Enhance Opportunities for Housing Among Recipients of Transitional Assistance". The thrust of this bill is to help individuals and families experiencing homelessness to obtain and retain permanent housing.

Many families and individuals who are homeless receive monthly financial assistance under the Emergency Aid to Elders, Disabled and Children (EAEDC) or the Transitional Aide to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) programs. These monthly payments are reduced when the family or individual enters a homeless shelter since the recipient will not incur housing expenses while in the shelter.

Under the provisions of Senate 66, the Department of Transitional Assistance would be required to deposit funds equal to the amount of the housing expense reduction into an escrow account. The escrowed funds would then be available for use by the EAEDC and TAFDC recipients for obtaining and retaining permanent housing, thus eliminating the need for these individuals to live in a homeless shelter.

In a February 2009 Issue Brief entitled "The Home is the Foundation," Catholic Charities USA described the home as "the very foundation for raising children, for seeking comfort, and for preparing oneself to participate in broader society through work, education, and civic engagement." The Conference respectfully submits that all residents of the Commonwealth should be able to obtain a home of their own. This bill will assist the more vulnerable members of society in their efforts to reside in stable housing and eventually transition into a permanent home.

Thus the Conference urges the Committee to report Senate 66 favorably, recommending the bill's passage.

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.