



CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF ILLINOIS
Legislative Update

Social Services
Social Justice
Immigration
Prison Ministry
Senior Issues

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The 98th Illinois General Assembly adjourned the 2013 Spring Legislative Session on May 31, 2013. A number of major issues were not yet resolved by the end of session, most notably reform of the state pension system that has a significant impact on the state budget.

There were a number of important issues in the area of social services and social justice that were addressed during the spring session. The following summarizes a few of these issues:

State Budget

The State received some unexpected tax revenues that the General Assembly anticipates will help avoid some significant cuts in the state budget. In recent years, human services programs especially have seen significant budget cuts to programs. Under House Bill 213, human services will maintain program funding levels from FY2013 for the most part. However, some appropriations are lower than those proposed by the Governor earlier this year, and some state agencies will have an across the board 2.5 percent reduction. In addition, the human services budget accounts for full year funding in hopes that no supplemental appropriations will be needed next year.

Under House Bill 206, some of the unexpected tax revenue will also be used to pay down the backlog of bills the state owes to many human services providers. The General Assembly expects that some of this spending will also garner federal Medicaid matching funds.

Also, there are no anticipated closings of correctional facilities in FY 2014. Last year saw the closure of two prisons (including the Tamms super-max prison), two youth centers and three adult transition centers.

Legislation

Senate Bill 26 (Medicaid Expansion) – *Passed both the House and Senate.* This bill implements the expansion of Medicaid to single, low income adults with income below 133 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, as provided under the federal Affordable Care Act. The federal government has indicated it would fund 100 percent of the expansion through FY2016. In FY 2017, federal funding will be reduced to 90 percent and Illinois will have to pay 10 percent of the cost. CCI supports the expansion of Medicaid as means to provide access to health care for low-income individuals. However, we also express caution over the cost of this expansion and whether the federal and state government can bear the financial burden at this time. We also have concerns about this leading to expanded coverage of morally objectionable services. Further information on this issue can be found on the CCI website at <http://www.ilcatholic.org/cci-supports-medicaid-expansion-to-more-low-income-adults/>.

House Bill 207/House Bill 2275 (Community Care Program) – *Both bills passed the House and Senate and have been signed into law by the Governor.* These two bills address the Community Care

Program. HB 207 provides supplemental funding (\$173 million) for FY2013 to help cover the expenses owed to community providers, such as Catholic Charities. HB 2275 is a companion bill that sets out certain reforms to the Community Care Program, including provisions aimed at increasing Medicaid enrollment of the seniors participating in the program. This is anticipated to then lead to more federal Medicaid matching funds.

House Bill 2404 (Raising age of adult court jurisdiction – felonies) – *Passed the House and Senate.* A few years ago, the state raised the age from 17 to 18 for jurisdiction of the adult court over youth charged for misdemeanors. HB 2404 expands this to provide the age is also raised for adult court from 17 to 18 for youth charged with certain felonies. There are certain more serious felonies, however, that will still trigger an automatic transfer to adult court. CCI supported HB 2404.

House Bill 2401 (Redeploy Illinois) – *Passed the House and Senate.* The Redeploy Illinois program provides services, such as counseling and tutoring, to youth at-risk of incarceration. HB 2401 authorizes the program to be implemented in areas of Cook County, and also makes adjustments to allow for programming to be focused on smaller regions rather than on a large county basis. CCI supports the efforts of the Redeploy Illinois program.

House Bill 1348/Senate Bill 1858 (Ending mandatory life sentences without parole – juveniles) - *HB 1348 passed a House committee, but neither bill moved forward for further consideration.* In a recent court decision, the US Supreme Court prohibited the imposition of mandatory life sentences without parole for juveniles. As a result, states, including Illinois, need to adjust current criminal sentencing statutes to reflect this. HB 1348 and SB 1858 would allow for periodic review of those persons who had previously received this sentence. The review allows for victims and family members to be part of the process. CCI wrote a letter to the editor in support of this legislation; the letter can be found on the CCI website at: http://www.ilcatholic.org/wp-content/uploads/CCI_Statement_Juvenile_Life_Wo_Parole_03052013.pdf. Those who were in opposition to this legislation had concerns over the review process, among other provisions. Although the bill did not move forward in the spring, discussions were ongoing among the interested parties. CCI will continue to monitor this issue.

House Bill 29 (WIC program) – *Failed in the House by a vote of 35-79-1.* Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago administers WIC Food Centers in the City of Chicago under a federal grant from the USDA. Originally developed, in part, to help prevent fraud in the WIC program, WIC Food Centers provide nutritional food to mothers and their children. Furthermore, through Catholic Charities, staff at the Food Centers provide a number of supportive services, including job training, counseling and assistance with health care needs.

Currently, WIC participants will receive food vouchers for either grocery stores or a WIC Food Center based on their location. This process of providing vouchers for only WIC Food Centers allows the Food Centers to make plans for inventory and staff. HB 29 would allow for a WIC food

voucher to be used at either a grocery store or a WIC (Women, Infant and Children) Food Center. If the State were to change this process, Catholic Charities and the Food Centers would not be able to adequately develop plans for appropriate inventory or staffing. Such planning is also essential to meet the requirements of the federal USDA grant. CCI was opposed to this legislation.