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Statement from Catholic Conference on Senate Bill 1123

SPRINGFIELD- Following the close vote on Senate Bill 1123 by the Senate Executive Committee, the Catholic Conference of Illinois issued the following statement:

"Lawmakers are obviously engaged in this issue. We will continue to seek a resolution that allows Catholic Charities to serve thousands of abused and neglected children in Illinois, and we are hopeful that resolution will be supported moving forward," said Robert Gilligan, Executive Director, Catholic Conference of Illinois.

"This legislation allows Catholic Charities to operate within Church teachings, within the law and always with the best interest of the child at the forefront. Those in civil unions will not be prevented from becoming foster or adoptive parents. From Catholic Charities, they will be referred to DCFS or to one of the approximately 50 other private child welfare agencies throughout the state. Our agencies serve thousands of abused and neglected children in Illinois and are constantly rated a top performer by DCFS in providing permanency, stable foster homes and protection from further harm. We simply want to continue."

Main Point of Legislation

SB 1123 does not ban civil union couples from becoming foster or adoptive parents or infringe on the benefits afforded civil union partners under the recent law. The legislation provides clarification to the legislative intent of the Illinois Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act, which says "Nothing in this act shall interfere with or regulate the religious practice of any religious body." SB 1123 respects the long-standing and effective public/private partnership between DCFS and faith-based organizations in providing child welfare services. In addition, the legislation ensures that the current casework, therapeutic relationships, and support systems for thousands of abused and vulnerable children and families served by faith-based agencies are not disrupted.

About the Catholic Conference of Illinois

Formed in 1969 by the Roman Catholic Bishops of Illinois, the Catholic Conference of Illinois (CCI) is the agent through which the dioceses of Illinois may act mutually and cooperatively in matters of interdiocesan and statewide interest. CCI is a board-approved administration with legislative priorities.

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