January 17, 2019

Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) is the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops in Indiana regarding state and national matters.

Bills are moving through committees and on the floor; the session is moving at a fast pace. Generally, less controversial bills have been heard thus far but next week committees will be hearing some more controversial bills. Some have been scheduled and others are anticipated soon.

SB 104, Small loans, authored by Senator Greg Walker (R – Columbus), will be heard in Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee on Wednesday, January 23 at 1 PM. ICC supports the bill as it will limit the interest and fees charged to no more than 36% APR. Small loans are loans of short duration and up to $600; current APR can be as high as 390%. Small loans are a special category in Indiana law. This is the first time a proactive bill to address predatory lending will be heard. Last year a similar bill was not given a hearing. We appreciate Senator Eric Bassler (R – Washington), the new chair of the committee, giving it a hearing.

There are several bills in the House and Senate that deal with consumer credit that often target lower income persons. ICC is opposed to the bills as written (SB 587 and SB 613). Both provide for increased fees and interest and the conditions of the loan often traps the lender in a cycle of increasing debt. ICC is monitoring the bills, as these have not been scheduled yet. In the House, HB 1136 calls for a study of the consumer credit code. Last year it was a House bill that expanded the payday industry loan amount. The House Financial Institutions Committee, chaired by Representative Woody Burton (R – Whiteland), heard HB 1136 last week but will consider amendments this week and vote the bill. ICC is monitoring the bill.

House Public Policy Committee may hear HB 1211, Abortion matters, authored by Representative Peggy Mayfield (R- Martinsville), on Wednesday, January 23 or the following week. The bill will prohibit dismemberment abortions which are done only at hospitals and later in the pregnancy. ICC supports the bill.

Senate Education Committee did not vote this week on SB 241, School choice scholarships, authored by Senator Aaron Freeman (R – Indianapolis). Rather, the Senate is considering a change to the way the state distributes tuition for all students, public as well as those receiving scholarships. Currently, a student count is done in the fall and all tuition support is calculated then. Senators are considering two count dates – one in the fall and another at the start of second semester. This would provide the same effect as Senator Freeman’s bill. If the second bill does not materialize, SB 241 could be called and move in committee. We will keep watch and let you know what happens.
Senate Public Health Committee heard several bills this week. SB 352, Consent to pregnancy services of a minor, authored by Senator Jean Leising (R – Oldenburg), was of particular interest. The bill would allow a minor who is 16 and pregnant to consent to prenatal, labor and postpartum services without parental consent. Current law requires parental consent for minors under the age of 18. The bill attempts to address young women who do not have parental support and are pregnant. However, the bill also specifically authorized postpartum treatment to include contraception device, such as an IUD, and/or medication. Supporters of the bill are concerned that a pregnancy soon after the birth leads to problems for mothers and babies. Yet, this can be the first step to erosion of parental rights. Senator Ed Charbonneau (R – Valparaiso), committee chair held the bill. It may be voted on next week. ICC is monitoring the bill.

In addition to the Update, more detailed information regarding the bills, as well as detailed information about the legislative process and the Indiana General Assembly can be obtained by clicking here. Archived I-CAN Updates, ICC positions and other background information can be accessed on the ICC website www.indianacc.org