



I-CANUpdate

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INDIANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE CELEBRATES 50 YEARS (1967-2017)

Senate Committee on Children and Family passed SB 9, SNAP and drug convictions, authored by Senator James Merritt (R – Indianapolis), **on a bipartisan vote of 7 – 1**. SB 9 **removes the ban** imposed on persons who have been convicted of drug felonies, **which prohibits them from being able to access food stamps, when needed**. Indiana is one of a very few states that continues to have this lifetime ban. Especially after being released from prison, these individuals find it difficult to find work and provide for themselves. SNAP benefits are a tool that can be used to address recidivism and addiction problems that face many former offenders. **Several organizations spoke in favor of the bill**, including food pantries, and individuals who work with offenders helping to secure jobs and rehabilitation. **The bill faces amendments on second reading** that would require drug testing and another that may limit access for a period of time. **Both amendments are unnecessary. ICC supports the bill.**

Senate Committee on Children and Families also heard but took no vote on SB 154, Removal of asset limits for SNAP, authored by Senator Merritt. **Several organizations spoke about the problems with asset limits**. In addition to costing the state more to administer the current limits, the rules are complex and often families with meager savings are ineligible and have to spend down which only exaggerates the problems for the family and creates further poverty. **The bill is expected to be voted on in committee next week. ICC supports the bill.**

House Family, Children and Human Affairs Committee heard HB 1287, Choice and Community Living pilot programs, authored by Representative Ed Clere (R – New Albany). The Choice program **provides help for elderly and disabled persons to remain in their homes rather than being forced into other care facilities** such as nursing facilities. It is more cost effective as well as better for the persons to remain in their own home setting. **ICC was instrumental in helping to pass the initial Choice program in the 80's**. HB 1287 extends this concept by assisting and by helping these individuals identify other community resources that meet their needs before actual eligibility for Choice. The intent of the bill is to extend the pilot program throughout Indiana. **The bill is expected to be voted out of committee next week. ICC supports the bill.**

House Education Committee amended and passed unanimously HB 1079, Teacher licenses. HB 1079 **provides for extensive criminal background checks of all teachers in Indiana schools**. Newly hired teachers would have to complete a criminal background check prior to teaching or within 30 days of beginning in the classroom. Current employees would be subject to extensive background checks every five years. **Senate Education Committee also passed its version of these new requirements, bills SB 34 and SB 298**. There are minor differences in language and timing of the background reports which will have to be reconciled after the bills are passed by each chamber. **HB 1079 will be on third reading next week. The Senate bills have**

been recommitted to Senate Appropriations Committee for further review. ICC supports the bills.

Another major education topic this year is pre-K or preschool pilot program providing scholarships for children to attend quality preschools. The pilot began 3 years ago. Bills in both bodies this year will expand it to more children and more counties. Neither bill expands the program statewide. **SB 276, Early education grant pilot program**, (the Senate's version) authored by Senator Travis Holdman (R - Markle) **was heard in Senate Education Committee on Wednesday. It will take up the bill for amendment and vote next week.** The House will consider its version, **HB 1004**, authored by Representative Bob Behning (R – Indianapolis), **on Tuesday next week.** Again, **there are differences between the proposed bills.** House bill includes a provision for these students' access to the school choice scholarship for kindergarten following the pre-K experience. **ICC supports the bills and their purpose** of giving parents the right to choose the educational experience that is best suited to the child and family needs.

Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee heard SB 474, Small loans, authored by Senator Ed Melton (D - Merrillville) **on Thursday.** The committee **only held discussion and no vote. The bill would add some further disclosure requirements for payday loans and provide an earlier installment option for borrowers.** While these efforts may help in some instances, it does not alter the payday lending model. **SB 474 along with SB 245, Long term small loans**, authored by Senator Holdman, **will be considered at the committee hearing on February 9.** SB 245 would extend the payday model to larger loans for longer period of time. **SB 474 would not significantly alter current law, but SB 245 would and is not in the interest of the common good. ICC is neutral regarding SB 474 but is opposed to SB 245.**

In addition to the Update, you can obtain more detailed information regarding the bills, as well as detailed information about the legislative process and the Indiana General Assembly by clicking [here](#). You can also access the archived I-CAN Updates, ICC positions and other background information at the ICC website www.indianacc.org