



February 18, 2016

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

SB 272, Palliative Care and Quality of Life Advisory Council, authored by Senator Tim Lanane (D – Anderson), **passed the House Government and Regulatory Reform Committee unanimously, 12-0.** The bill establishes a council to assess the extent of palliative care programs and to educate the public and health care providers regarding palliative care. **The bill passed the Senate 50-0. ICC supports the bill** because palliative care is a positive way to address the needs of people with serious illness. Our society should embrace what St. John Paul called “the way of love and true mercy” by surrounding patients with love, support, and companionship, providing the assistance needed to ease their physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering. Palliative care is designed to do just that by providing for the needs of the patient while respecting the sacredness and preciousness of human life. **The bill should be voted on next week.**

House Education Committee heard SB 334, Choice Scholarships, but did not vote on Tuesday. **The bill has met with resistance by the public school community because according to them, it expands vouchers.** While it does permit a second opportunity during second semester, the **number of persons seeking this is very small** and the primary use will be for high school students who are expelled or drop out. Some want to only permit the second semester voucher for drop out students. However, public or charter schools are reimbursed for students who leave the voucher program to return there during the second semester. **The committee will consider amendments and vote next Tuesday;** House committee members are urged to support the bill and not to amend it by restricting access to second semester scholarship. **Contact your Representative.** You can locate/contact your Representative by inserting your zip code under “Find Officials” located [here](#) and then your street address.

SB 325, Individual Development Accounts, authored by Senator Mark Messmer (R – Jasper), **passed the House Family and Children Committee unanimously.** It expands these accounts to allow for purchase of a vehicle and increases the eligibility from 175% to 200% of poverty. The program assists low income persons to develop habits of saving and providing for capital and long term needs. **The bill now moves to House for vote. ICC supports the bill.**

SB 11, ABLE saving account for persons with disabilities, sponsored by Senator Luke Kenley (R – Noblesville), **passed the House Family and Children Committee unanimously.** SB 11 establishes a qualified ABLE program under which a person may make contributions for a taxable year for the benefit of an eligible individual with a disability. **It now moves to House Ways and Means Committee for consideration. ICC supports the bill.**

SB 132, Food stamp assistance after drug conviction, did not get a vote this week in House Family and Children Committee. The budget agency raised fiscal concerns regarding administration of the program. However, **fiscal issues were addressed in the Senate and removed. Efforts are continuing to pass it next week.** You can contact your Representative [here](#).

Senate Health Committee heard HB 1337, Abortion, on Wednesday **but did not take a vote.** An **amendment is being drafted** to clarify that remains of fetus under 20 weeks will not have to have the same process and legal documents, such as death certificates, as required for other deceased persons. There is **also discussion about including SB 313 or parts of it in HB 1337.** An **amendment and vote is expected next week, February 24th.**

Senate Appropriations Committee heard testimony but did not vote on HB 1002, Next Generation Hoosier Educators Scholarship, authored by Speaker Brian Bosma (R – Indianapolis). The bill provides \$7500 scholarship to attract and retain students to the teaching profession and commit to teach at least 5 years in Indiana schools, including school scholarship or voucher schools. Chairman Kenley often tweaks bills. **We expect it will be voted on next week. ICC supports the bill.**

We expect that the following bills will be heard in committee next week

HB 1340, Long term small loans will be discussed in Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee next Thursday, February 25th. The bill as it passed the House would establish a study committee to investigate the Payday lending industry. However, **Senator Travis Holdman (R – Markle) who chairs the committee may amend the bill and put back the original intent of the bill – provide a product which allows for longer term loans. ICC has concerns** about the industry and its impact on low income households. Indiana law regulating this industry is better than most states and proponents claim that this product too would be regulated and could build credit history, making it different from the typical payday loan.

Payday loans tend to trap persons in debt and in the end **charge exorbitant interest and fees** which requires the borrower to pay much more than what is reasonable interest and repayment of the principal. The majority of payday loans are to cover everyday expenses (7/10). Although employed, a borrower's pay is not enough to make ends meet, so desperate they seek out money to cover expenses. Hence, they end up extending and rolling the debt and stay in debt for months because the paycheck is not enough for living expenses plus high interest and fees. On average, payday loans carry a 391% APR (annual percentage rate).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church points out that exploiting people living in poverty is theft: “Even if it does not contradict the provisions of civil law, any form of unjustly taking and keeping the property of others is against the seventh commandment: thus, deliberate retention of goods lent or of objects lost; business fraud; paying unjust wages; forcing up prices by taking advantage of the ignorance or hardship of another.” (no. 2409)

The weakest members of society should be helped to defend themselves against usury. Laws and policies must protect them from additional burdens. “All economic life should be shaped by moral principles. Economic choices and institutions must be judged by how they protect or undermine human life and dignity of the human person, support the family, and serve the common good” (US bishops, “*A Catholic Framework for Economic Life*”)

Senate Judiciary Committee will hear HB 1064, Terminating parent child relationship, authored by Representative Hal Slager (R – Schererville), **on Wednesday.** The **bill passed the House 93-0.** HB 1064 allows a parent who is the victim of an act of rape from which a child was conceived to file a petition to terminate the parent-child relationship between the child and the alleged perpetrator of the act of rape. **ICC supports the bill in that it supports victims of rape and may promote keeping the child;** it also supports the woman from being further victimized later.

In addition to the Update, one 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