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Testimony on SB 339

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Kansas Catholic Conference

Senate Standing Committee on Assessment and Taxation

February 14, 2012
10:30 A.M.

Chairman Donovan and Members of the Committee:

The Kansas Catholic Conference is the public policy arm of the Catholic Church in Kansas and speaks on behalf of the state's four Catholic bishops. We appreciate the opportunity to offer our perspective on SB 339.

The Catholic Church does not claim any special competence over tax policy, however we do believe that we have a role in drawing attention to the moral dimension of the choices before you.

The Catholic tradition has long recognized the importance and dignity of work. Therefore we applaud efforts to expand economic growth and the availability of jobs. This is an important and necessary endeavor. Fortunately, Kansas has not suffered the high unemployment rates found in other states. Nonetheless, these remain difficult times for many Kansans -- with and without jobs. Therefore, it should be the goal of policymakers to effect both an increase in the availability of jobs and in the wages paid to those who are employed but struggling to meet their families' needs.

In recent weeks, many low-income Kansans have expressed to us their concerns over the proposal to eliminate the Earned Income Tax Credit, which was designed as an incentive to work. We are concerned about the effect that EITC's elimination would have on the working poor. While it is not the mission of the Catholic Church to insist that programs like the EITC continue in perpetuity, we do have an obligation to advocate for a tax structure that gives special

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Attachment # 33

consideration to the needs of those living on the margins of society.

SB 339 is a broad plan with ambitious goals, so we recognize that it cannot be reduced to one of its constituent parts. We also know that the final tax reform product will bear significant differences than any legislation currently introduced. Therefore we ask legislators to approve in the end only a plan that, taken as a whole, is fair in its assignment of burdens. The final plan should not ask more of the poor than the wealthy. It should not be paid for with the sacrifices of the disadvantaged.

Whether it be tax policy, budget policy, or social policy, ultimately we seek a political program that respects the dignity of each and every human being and empowers him or her to flourish.

Thank you for your consideration.