

Housing Finance and Policy & Public Health Finance Division: House File 2799

February 17, 2010



Good morning Madame Chair and Members of the Committee. My name is Alexandra Fitzsimmons and I am the Policy Director for the Minnesota Catholic Conference. The MCC, which is comprised of the dioceses of Crookston, Duluth, St. Cloud, New Ulm and Winona, and the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, is the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Minnesota.

I am here today to speak in support of House File 2799. This bill will provide needed funding for Minnesota's food shelf programs. The moral quality of our community, our state, can be measured by how our neighbors in need are *faring*. Nearly one million Minnesotans live in households struggling to put food on the table. Last year, hungry Minnesotans missed 125 million meals. 47 percent of adults and 14 percent of children who received food from Minnesota's 300 food shelves, skipped meals in order to stretch their family's budget. The moral quality of our state can also be measured by how we *respond* to our sisters and brothers who are in need – those of us who are homeless, sick, unemployed or **hungry**. This bill will help our neighbors feed their children, their families and themselves.

Every human person is sacred, and has inviolable dignity, value and worth. Each of us has a right to life **and** to the material support, the basic needs, required to live a truly human existence. In order to live with dignity, we **all** must have enough food. The hunger that is hurting the lives of so many of our neighbors throughout Minnesota demands an immediate response – especially in our current economic climate. As Representative Benson has stated time and time again, hunger **is** a justice issue. In fact, there is no more basic human need than food.

Because we are all responsible for all, we must address the struggles that our neighbors throughout Minnesota are facing. Hunger diminishes the lives of our sisters and brothers and undermines human life and dignity. Please support House File 2799. Thank you for your time, leadership and courage – especially during these difficult times.