

Testimony of Monsignor John J. McCarthy Re: Raised Bill 5473

Good morning. My name is Monsignor John McCarthy and I am Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Hartford. I am grateful to you for the opportunity to speak to this committee in opposition to Raised Bill 5473. The Bill would eliminate the statute of limitations for civil actions alleging sexual misconduct toward minors.

The focus of my remarks today is my concern that enactment of this bill could divert resources currently used by various organizations connected with the Catholic Church in Connecticut to further their mission on behalf of all residents of Connecticut, Catholic and non-Catholic alike. Apart from the government, various Catholic organizations in Connecticut comprise the largest provider of education and of social and health care services in this State.

With regard to education, Catholic school enrollment of 33,280 students provides savings to tax payers of over \$400 million annually. This figure addresses only savings in operating costs; it excludes the capital cost that would necessarily be incurred in new construction and repair of schools in the absence of Catholic educational institutions. Perhaps more importantly, Catholic schools represent invaluable savings in human terms. A dropout rate of less than one percent in Catholic schools, as opposed to 20% to 25% dropout rates in urban public schools, means that Catholic schools, many in urban areas, are proficient in providing the education that is key to giving inner city students the opportunity to secure a sound education that will allow them to escape the drugs, gangs, and violence that plague our inner cities.

With regard to social services, Catholic organizations throughout the State provide a wide array of services that benefit all age ranges, from children to senior citizens. They provide emergency clothing, shelter, food pantries, housing, rent and utility assistance, homes for young families at risk, and mental health counseling to those in need, regardless of religion or ability to pay. Pregnancy services, including counseling and parenting education, are offered as well.

With regard to health care, Catholic hospitals employ over 12,000 full- and part-time employees who provide high quality care to the patients they serve. Those hospitals contribute approximately \$100 million in community benefits, that is, services for which the hospitals are not compensated. Furthermore, the Archdiocese of Hartford has provided seed money to the Order of Malta for the Malta House of Care which provides free primary medical services to the uninsured. The Malta House of Care now serves patients in the Greater Hartford area and will soon be doing so in Waterbury as well.

I hope that these brief observations give you a clearer picture of what various Catholic organizations are doing to assist those in need throughout this State. Of course, that commitment demands a substantial financial outlay. The costs those organizations would incur in connection with litigation arising from any new claims this bill would make possible would necessarily diminish their capacity to provide the services they deliver so effectively. That would, in turn, cause undue harm to those whom those organizations benefit -- the State, the tax payers and, most especially, those in need.

Thank you for permitting me to speak to you today.