



# Washington State Catholic Conference

The Public Policy Voice of the Bishops of Washington State

## WSCC Newsletter for Catholic Schools

Winter Quarter 2021

### *A Message From The Washington State Catholic Conference*

February 2021

Dear Catholic School Parents, Teachers, Administrators, and Supporters,

Greetings from the Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC), the public policy voice of the bishops of Washington State. The WSCC is pleased to begin communicating with you regularly throughout the year via this quarterly newsletter. Our goal is to bring you useful information about public policy and state legislation impacting Catholic education in our state.

As the public policy voice of the Bishops of Washington state, the WSCC advocates for policies that serve the common good and recognize the dignity of every human person. Our advocacy is guided by Catholic Social Teaching, and supporting Catholic schools and education is a key goal of our mission. We invite you to [join our advocacy network](#), and receive our regular public policy updates.

Additionally, we can also provide local advocacy training and help you engage in year-round advocacy efforts. Please visit our [website](#) to learn more about us and what we do.

Administrators, teachers, and staff, your mission is so important to the life of our Church. Thank you for your leadership. Parents, thank you for choosing Catholic education and seeking an environment that teaches children to serve the common good. The WSCC looks to support your Catholic schools. Catholic schools are communities that are rooted in Gospel values, and our society is better when Catholic schools thrive. We look forward to staying in touch with all of you, and if you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 206-274-7680 and [mario.villanueva@wacatholics.org](mailto:mario.villanueva@wacatholics.org).

Thank you, and may God bless you abundantly,

Mario Villanueva  
Executive Director, WSCC



## Legislative Update

The state legislative session started on January 11 and lasts 105 days. This year the legislature will be setting a two-year state budget, so the session is longer and will run through the end of April. The WSCC analyzes and lobbies bills of importance to Catholic schools, the five bishops of Washington state, and our Catholic faith, all in service of the common good. This session is particularly unique as it is all being conducted virtually due to COVID-19.

Below are examples of bills of interest to Catholic schools that we are currently working on:

[Senate Bill 5200](#) (SB 5200) establishes a tax credit for contributions to student scholarship organizations. While this bill focuses on benefits for students who receive special education services or are foster children, the WSCC supports all efforts that lead to school choice and could be expanded in the future to benefit Catholic school students and families.

[House Bill 1131](#) (HB 1131) provides a waiver for private schools to maintain their approval status when they are unable to meet minimum schools days or instructional hours due to a significant disruption resulting from an emergency situation. This bill is favorable to Catholic schools and allows them to be in good status with the state as schools contend with the challenges of the pandemic. The WSCC supports HB 1131.

[House Bill 1139](#) (HB 1139) creates new water testing requirements for private and public schools. Currently Catholic schools conduct tests for lead in their water systems, and this legislation creates onerous requirements. The WSCC is opposed to HB 1139.

[Senate Bill 5205](#) (SB 5205) establishes a K-12 education voucher program. The WSCC is highly supportive of school choice programs that increase families' opportunities to attend Catholic schools. However, this is an issue that is traditionally opposed by the current majority in the House and Senate. Passing a school choice bill requires an extensive amount of planning and coalition building, which are part of the WSCC's long-term goals. WSCC supports SB 5205, but it is not currently expected to be granted a committee hearing or be passed into law this session.



## What Public Policy Issues Are Important to Catholics of Washington?

Join our network to find out: [wacatholics.org/join](http://wacatholics.org/join). You will receive our Catholic Advocacy Bulletin and occasional Action Alerts. Through the end of the state legislative session in April our Catholic Advocacy Bulletin is emailed weekly. During other months, it is emailed monthly.

## The Bishops' State Legislative Priorities

Every year the five bishops of the Archdiocese of Seattle, Diocese of Yakima, and Diocese of Spokane select legislative priorities that reflect Catholic social teaching and our desire to serve the common good. Catholic schools are one of the bishops' priorities. More details on their eleven legislative priorities can be found [here](#). A small example of bills that we are working on include:

- [House Bill 1297](#) (HB 1297), the Working Families Tax Exemption. This tax credit will assist low-income, working individuals and families, including tax-paying immigrants. The HB 1297 tax credit seeks to address Washington's regressive tax system, which causes low-income Washingtonians, who are primarily Black, American Indian and Alaskan Native, Latina or Latino, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, and multiracial, to pay six times more in taxes as a percentage of their household income in comparison to wealthier residents. The WSCC supports HB 1297.
- [House Bill 1141](#) (HB 1141) expands access to assisted suicide. The WSCC opposes HB 1141.
- [House Bill 1091](#) (HB 1091), the Clean Fuels Bill. HB 1091 reduces the carbon intensity of transportation fuel to reduce greenhouse emissions gas. In accordance with Pope Francis's call to care for God's creation in *Laudato Si'*, the WSCC supports HB 1091.
- [House Bill 1009](#) (HB 1009) expands the coverage of abortion in student health plans at colleges and universities. The WSCC opposes HB 1009.
- [Senate Bill 5068](#) (SB 5068) expands postpartum maternal coverage from 60 days to one year for recipients of Apple Health. Apple Health provides health coverage for eligible families, children, low-income adults, and certain disabled individuals. Throughout Washington state and the US, maternal mortality rates are much higher than other developed countries, with stark ethnic disparities. Related to our health care and racial justice legislative priorities, the WSCC supports SB 5068.



## Supreme Court Decision Supports School Choice

This past summer the Supreme Court issued a decision on *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue* and ruled that the state of Montana cannot exclude religious schools from receiving tax credit-funded scholarships under its school choice program. This decision paves the way for more school choice options for parents who want to send their children to Catholic schools. Establishing school choice options for Catholic school parents is a long-term goal of the WSCC.

## Save the Date: Cornerstone Catholic Conference, October 30

Join us for the virtual Cornerstone Catholic Conference on October 30. An initiative of the bishops of Washington state, this year's theme is "Forming Disciples for Life and Justice." Registration will begin in the spring via the WSCC [website](#).

## Invitation to Join School Choice Efforts

Catholic education has stood as a beacon of hope to countless Washington families, raising up generations of young people committed to pursuing truth, growing in virtue, and bettering their communities. It has created opportunities for the poor and marginalized by providing affordable, excellent education as a means for advancement.

Yet increasing costs and changing demands on education have dramatically impacted a family's ability to choose a Catholic education for their child. Catholic schools are increasingly out of reach for low-income and middle class families.

What if Washington state parents could choose how their child's education dollars are spent - including using that state apportioned money to pay for a Catholic education? Not only would that promote educational equity, it would transform how Catholic schools are funded. If you believe that every family should have access to an excellent education of their choosing, I encourage you to join us.

We are a bipartisan, statewide coalition of educators, parents, lawmakers, executives, and community leaders who believe that income should not be a barrier for a parent to choose the best school for their child. Our team is building a multi-year strategy to fight for this change. We are looking for collaborators like you to help strategize, organize, fund, or just learn more.

Email Quentin Orem at [qsorem@gmail.com](mailto:qsorem@gmail.com) to join the movement.



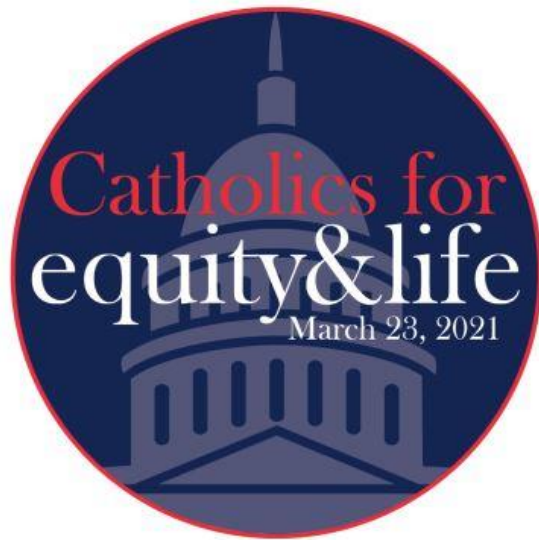
### **WSCC Staff**

We invite you to contact us at any time.

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# Catholic Advocacy Day

Tuesday March 23, 2021 | 8am-4pm

In this time of COVID and the call for economic and racial equity, join with Catholic parishes and organizations in a day of advocacy for a society in which all people and Earth can thrive.

## Virtual Events

- Mass with Archbishop Etienne or Bishop Elizondo
- Speaker from State Government (TBD)
- Briefings on Issues
- Legislative Zoom meetings by District
- Social media campaigns

Register by March 9 at  
[ipjc.org/cad](http://ipjc.org/cad)

Questions? Call 206.223.1138 or email  
[catholicadvocacyday@ipjc.org](mailto:catholicadvocacyday@ipjc.org)

