

January 26, 2023

To: Montana House Taxation Committee

From: Matthew Brower, Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference

Re: Testimony in support of HB 268

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Matt Brower (B-R-O-W-E-R) and I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference. I speak on behalf of the Roman Catholic bishops of Montana.

I am here today to voice our support for House Bill 268.

Families across our state are facing increasing financial pressures due to inflation, the rising cost of housing and other economic factors. Child poverty is a serious problem and it's no secret that raising children is only becoming more expensive. As just one example, Catholic Social Services of Montana runs a Baby Boutique out of the Cathedral of St. Helena. In fiscal year 21-22, they handed out a little over 13,000 diapers to families in need. Catholic Social Services is currently on pace to hand out over 26,000 diapers out of just one location this current fiscal year. They are averaging 10 new families per month.

A child tax credit is a tool that can help offset the impact of rising inflation and provide some measure of relief to families who are feeling most acutely these various economic strains. In turn, it can help increase family stability and offer parents a bit of support as they try to provide homes within which their children can thrive.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, on behalf of the Montana Catholic Conference, I urge a "do pass" and thank you for your time.