

January 31, 2025

To: Montana House Business and Labor Committee

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

Re: Testimony in support of HB 310

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Matt Brower. 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 310.

Catholic teaching calls us to live out a preferential option for the poor and we believe that a basic moral test for society is how our most vulnerable members are faring. We recall what Jesus said in Matthew's gospel, "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."

In the Catholic tradition, sheltering the homeless is considered a basic act of love and a core work of mercy. It is faith in action. We call to mind the following passage from the book of the Prophet Isaiah:

*Thus says the LORD:  
Share your bread with the hungry,  
shelter the oppressed and the homeless;  
clothe the naked when you see them,  
and do not turn your back on your own.*

The state matching grants provided for by House Bill 310 will help shelter providers across the state as they seek to provide essential services for some of our most vulnerable populations. At a time when we see increasing rates of homelessness across Montana, this legislation provides critical support to shelter providers who are on the front lines working with those in need to bring some measure of stability and dignity to their lives.

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