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**To:** House Human Services Committee  
**From:** Christopher Dodson, Executive Director  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 2181 - Public Assistance for Pregnant Women  
**Date:** March 14, 2023

The North Dakota Catholic Conference supports Senate Bill 2181 to better provide assistance to all pregnant women and their children, born and unborn.

For us, the starting principle is that we should respect all human life, no matter what the circumstances of conception or the parent's particular situation. When it comes to assistance to the poor, "need alone is the poor man's worthiness . . ." (St. John Chrysostom, 4th Century.)

Approaching the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) and Medicaid with this view we can see certain gaps in assistance. Senate Bill 2181 closes those gaps.

Senate Bill 2181 does this by:

- Providing TANF assistance to eligible women no matter what stage of pregnancy. Current law only provides assistance to women who are in their third trimester.
- Providing Medicaid to otherwise eligible pregnant women who are lawfully present in the United States. Currently, that assistance is only available to legal immigrants if they have been here for more than five years. The child's need, however, is no different if the mother had been here for four years or five years. Moreover, in nine months or less, that child will be a U.S. citizen.
- Removing the "family cap" in TANF so that assistance is provided as needed and not because of the circumstances of the child's conception.<sup>1</sup>
- Making permanent Medicaid coverage for postpartum women for twelve months after the last day of pregnancy. During the 2021 Special Session, the Legislative Assembly provided this coverage, but that legislation expires on June 30, 2023. SB 2181 ensures that this important coverage continues after June 30.<sup>2</sup>

These proposals are included in the North Dakota Catholic Conference's *Responding with Love* set of legislative proposals. Among those proposals, the ones included in SB 2181 have a special place because they close gaps in help for the poorest among us.

Please give a "**Do Pass**" recommendation to SB 2181.

<sup>1</sup> This change is also included as part of Senate Bill 2087, which the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) proposed.

<sup>2</sup> DHHS's proposed budget includes an appropriation to continue this coverage. SB 2181 would codify the coverage.