



Catholic  
Charities  
USA



Office of  
Domestic  
Social  
Development



September 21, 2005

United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

We understand that the House of Representatives may soon consider H.R. 2123, the School Readiness Act of 2005, and that an amendment will be offered by Representative Charles Boustany concerning the ability of religious entities receiving Head Start funding to employ co-religionists and those who share their religious values. We are writing to urge you to support this amendment to recognize the freedom of religious organizations to take religion into account in making their employment decisions, and to oppose any efforts to undermine or limit their ability to do so.

The Catholic Church and other religious entities serve people of all faiths, often the most poor and vulnerable in our society, through education, health and social services agencies. Many of these agencies receive government funds or government funded services. Indeed, Catholic programs have been receiving government funds to provide assistance to the poor and needy for over one hundred fifty years. To maintain its very identity, a religious or faith-based organization must be able to consider an individual's religious affiliation and willingness to support the mission and values of the institution when making employment decisions. Congress recognized this need when it passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, by specifically exempting religious employers from the Title VII restrictions on consideration of religion in hiring decisions, and again in 1972 when it clarified the reach of the exemption.

We urge you to support Rep. Boustany's amendment to H.R. 2123 to respect the right of religious organizations participating in Head Start to maintain and preserve their identity as they contribute to the common good by serving children in need, and to oppose any amendment that fails to do so.

Sincerely,

*Most Rev. Nicholas DiMarzio*

Most Rev. Nicholas DiMarzio, Ph.D., D.D.  
Bishop of Brooklyn  
Chairman, Domestic Policy Committee  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

*Fr. Larry Snyder*

Rev. Larry Snyder  
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*Michael Rodgers*

Michael Rodgers  
Interim President and CEO  
Catholic Health Association  
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