



## United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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August 9, 2021

Dear Senator/ Representative:

On behalf of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, the Committee on Pro-Life Activities, and the Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), we write in support of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, S. 1486,<sup>1</sup> which will make the workplace a safer environment for nursing mothers, pregnant women, and their unborn children.

Catholic teaching is clear that policy choices around work should be made to support the family because “family life and work mutually affect one another.”<sup>2</sup> The Catholic bishops of the United States have repeatedly called for circumstances of employment that better support family life, especially in the challenges associated with having children.<sup>3</sup> As Pope Francis has noted, “The State has the responsibility to pass laws and create work to ensure the future of young people and help them realize their plan of forming a family.”<sup>4</sup> Perhaps no pope has written more about the role of working mothers than Pope John Paul II, who emphasized that:

...the whole labor process must be organized and adapted in such a way as to respect the requirements of the person and his or her forms of life, above all life in the home, taking into account the individual’s age and sex. It is a fact that in many societies women work in nearly every sector of life. But it is fitting that they should be able to fulfil their tasks in accordance with their own nature, without being discriminated against and without being excluded from jobs for which they are capable, but also without lack of respect for their family aspirations and for their specific role in contributing, together with men, to the good of society.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Pope John Paul II concluded that “The true advancement of women requires that labor should be structured in such a way that women do not have to pay for their advancement by abandoning what is specific to them and at the expense of the family, in which women as mothers have an irreplaceable role.”<sup>6</sup>

There is ample evidence that the current legal landscape does not adequately protect pregnant workers. The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act addresses this injustice by requiring employers with 15 or more employees to provide reasonable accommodations for pregnant workers; protecting pregnant workers from being denied employment opportunities, being forced

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<sup>1</sup> The USCCB chairmen are specifically endorsing the express legislative text of S. 1486 as reported out by the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions on Tuesday, August 3, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 76; *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 294.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., *Economic Justice for All*, nos. 207-208.

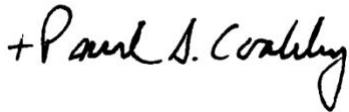
<sup>4</sup> *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 44.

<sup>5</sup> *Laborem Exercens*, no. 19.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

to take leave if another reasonable accommodation is available, or otherwise being retaliated against for requesting reasonable accommodations; and providing rights and remedies for workers if they are denied reasonable accommodations. We applaud these efforts which demonstrate a respect for life, family, and the dignity of workers. We stand ready to work with Congress to strengthen legal protections for pregnant workers and nursing mothers.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Paul S. Coakley in black ink.

Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley  
Archbishop of Oklahoma City  
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice  
and Human Development

Handwritten signature of Joseph F. Naumann in black ink.

Most Reverend Joseph F. Naumann  
Archbishop of Kansas City in Kansas  
Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities

Handwritten signature of David A. Konderla in blue ink.

Most Reverend David A. Konderla  
Bishop of Tulsa  
Chairman, Subcommittee for the Promotion  
and Defense of Marriage