



## Michigan Report

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### **CATHOLIC CONFERENCE URGES COMPASSION IN WELFARE REFORM**

With confusion in the Senate over whether children on welfare would be exempt from the 48-month limit on assistance, the Michigan Catholic Conference is urging House members to put the legislation into conference committee and take a more "compassionate" review.

Earlier this month, the Senate tried to amend [HB 4409](#) and [HB 4410](#) to exempt children from the 48-month cut off, which is scheduled to take effect October 1 and would end assistance to more than 12,600 cases. But there was confusion as to whether that goal was actually achieved through a floor amendment and the legislation still awaits an immediate effect vote in the Senate.

The Conference, in a memo to House [Speaker Jase Bolger](#) (R-Marshall) and [Rep. Kenneth Kurtz](#) (R-Coldwater), chair of the Families, Children and Seniors Committee, said Thursday that a "more thorough discussion of the bills than what took place in the state Senate" must occur and that could be achieved if the bills are sent to conference committee.

"When House Bills 4409 and 4410 arrive from the Senate, Michigan Catholic Conference respectfully, and strongly, urges the House of Representatives to give a more thorough and compassionate review of this legislation, and to consider sending the bills to conference committee in order to allow for a discussion of how the state will prevent thousands of children from falling deeper into poverty if and when these bills become law. The welfare and dignity of vulnerable children must take priority over budget targets," the Conference [memo](#) states.

Response to the Conference's request was lukewarm.

Bolger spokesperson Ari Adler said the House will review what changes are made to the legislation, but technically they remain in the Senate.

"It shouldn't be a surprise to people that a temporary assistance program has a time limit," Mr. Adler said, noting Michigan has had the 48-month limit in law and the bill is removing the sunset on that limit. "If the Senate comes up with different language we would consider it when it comes over."

The House did increase the income disregard percentage to 50 percent from 20 percent, Mr. Adler noted, which for a family of three earning minimum wage would mean they could earn \$369 more a month and still qualify for cash assistance. He added that the bills don't change the ability of families to continue qualifying for food, rent and other state assistance programs.

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