



Washington State Catholic Conference

The Public Policy Voice of the Bishops of Washington State

WSCC Newsletter for Catholic Schools

Winter Quarter 2023

As the public policy voice of the five bishops of Washington state, the Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) advocates for policies that serve the common good and recognize the dignity of every human person. Our advocacy is guided by Catholic Social Teaching, and supporting Catholic schools and education is a key goal of our mission.

The 2023 State Legislative Session Is Underway

The 2023 state legislative session began on January 9 and concludes on April 23. Throughout the session, advocating for Catholic schools continues to be one of the primary legislative priorities of the WSCC. A full list of the bishops' [legislative priorities](#) may be found on our website.

Advocate with us during the legislative session! [Sign up](#) to stay informed of legislative issues via our [Catholic Advocacy Bulletin](#). We provide [Action Alerts](#), which are editable, prewritten letters that you can send to your legislators with the click of one button. We also have quick links to sign in electronically for or against bills. Through the Catholic Advocacy Bulletin, the WSCC provides ways to contact your legislators at key moments when they are considering bills of importance to Catholic Social Teaching. The bulletin is emailed weekly during the session, and monthly outside of the session.



Legislation Impacting Catholic Schools

Below are just a few examples of legislation impacting Catholic schools that the WSCC has been working on this session.

House Hearing for School Choice Bill

On February 2 the House Committee on Education conducted a hearing for [House Bill 1615](#) (HB 1615), which would establish education savings accounts that parents could apply to education costs, including tuition at Catholic schools. Priority would be given to children with disabilities, children who are from low-income households, and children who are from public schools that are identified as challenged schools in need of improvement. The WSCC coordinated testimony in support of the bill,

710 Ninth Avenue • Seattle, WA 98104 • Tel 206.301.0556 • Fax 206.301.0558 • E-mail: wsc@wacatholics.org

and the hearing may be viewed [here](#). In line with the bishops' education and Catholic schools legislative priority, the WSCC supports HB 1615. At this time, it is not anticipated that HB 1615 will pass out of the House committee and move further in the legislative process. [House Bill 1093](#) is another school choice bill that has been introduced and is also not expected to advance. However, the WSCC is working on long-term plans outside of the legislation session to create school choice options that will help parents to send their children to Catholic schools. More to come!

SB 5180 Helps Catholic Schools Hire New Teachers

[Senate Bill 5180](#) (HB 5180) would help Catholic schools hire new, qualified teachers. The bill creates the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact, which would allow certain licensed teachers from other states to also be licensed in Washington state. Additionally, SB 5180 also aids military spouses in obtaining teaching licensure in Washington. The WSCC supports HB 5180.



Additional WSCC Legislative Priorities

In addition to Catholic schools, the WSCC has number of other legislative priorities, all based on Catholic Social Teaching. Below are just a few highlights of other bills the bishops are supporting or opposing. Please see our [Catholic Advocacy Bulletins](#) for the latest on bill progress.

- [House Bill 1131/Senate Bill 5154](#) – The Washington Recycling and Packaging Act (WRAP Act) would address plastic and packaging waste by creating a set of graduated fees to be paid for by packaging manufacturers. Fees would be based on how reusable, compostable, or recyclable products are. Funds would then be used for improvements to infrastructure and provide uniform recycling access across the state. In line with the legislative priority to care for God's creation, the WSCC supports the WRAP Act.
- [House Bill 1281/Senate Bill 5179](#) – These companion bills loosen safeguards of current assisted suicide laws. Disabilities Rights Washington (DRW) and other disabilities advocates oppose this legislation, as it puts the disabled and other individuals at risk for being pressured to end their lives. The American Medical Association (AMA) also opposes these bills. See our [Action Alert](#) to learn more and send an editable, prewritten letter to your state legislators. In line with the bishops' legislative priority to respect life, the WSCC opposes HB 1281 and SB 5179.
- [House Bill 1124](#) - HB 1124 addresses affordable housing for low-income individuals by protecting tenants from excessive rent and related fees. Tenants would be given at least six months' notice for increases over 5% and be allowed to terminate tenancy without a penalty. Additionally, late penalties would be limited to the lesser of 10% of the rental amount or \$75. In accordance with the bishops' affordable housing legislative priority, the WSCC supports HB 1124.

- [Senate Joint Resolution 8202/House Joint Resolution 4201](#) - These resolutions would create a constitutional right to an abortion, allowing abortions to occur up to a baby's birth. When the US Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and granted states the ability to determine their own abortion laws last June, abortion laws in Washington state did not change. As determined by an initiative in 1991, abortion is currently allowed up to the point of a fetus's viability. The proposed constitutional amendment would make Washington's laws extreme, allowing for an abortion up to the point of birth. See our [Action Alert](#) to learn more and quickly send a letter to your legislators. In line with the bishops' legislative priority to respect life, the WSCC opposes SJR 8202 and HJR 4201.

Thank You, Catholic School Directors and Superintendent!

Did you know that each diocese in Washington has a director of schools or superintendent guiding Catholic schools in our state? Katie Rieckers is the director of schools in the Diocese of Spokane, Doug Rich is the director of schools in the Diocese of Yakima, and Nicholas Ford is the superintendent for Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Seattle. The WSCC thanks you for your leadership!



Useful Links for the Legislative Session

[Washington State Legislature](#) - Information on bills, hearings, legislators, and more
[Identify your district and legislators](#)
[Find bill information](#)
[WSCC website](#)



Washington State
Catholic Conference

tracey.yackley@wacatholics.org

WSCC Staff

We invite you to contact us at any time.

Mario Villanueva
Executive Director
mario.villanueva@wacatholics.org

Adrienne Corpuz Joyce
Director of Policy & Communications
adrienne.joyce@wacatholics.org

Tracey Wilson Yackley
Operations Manager

Join the [Washington State Catholic Conference](#) on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), and [Instagram](#)