



**New Jersey Catholic Conference  
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**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1829 and Senate Bill 1854**

**Submitted to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee by**

**Patrick R. Brannigan, Executive Director**

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On behalf of the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey, I urge the members of the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee to support Senate Bill 1829 sponsored by Senators Vitale and Whelan and Senate Bill 1854 sponsored by Senators Vitale and Rice.

S1829 would increase the benefit levels provided to Work First New Jersey recipients by 10% each of the next four fiscal years and in years thereafter the benefits would be adjusted according to the cost of living adjustment applied under the federal Social Security program.

Today, a family of three receives a maximum benefit of \$424 per month – the same amount as 29 years ago. Simply stated, \$424 a month does not provide families the same ability to purchase food, clothing and housing as it did three decades ago. Tens of thousands of innocent children suffer because the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) benefits have not been increased in 29 years.

S1854 would repeal the “family caps” that currently prevent Work First New Jersey grants from increasing as the result of the birth of a child. These “family caps” deny children much needed help just because their parents embraced the precious gift of life.

Increasing poverty in New Jersey is a challenge for society – not just government. We try to do our part through Catholic Charities, the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, the Mount Carmel Guild and our parishes. Each year, Catholic Charities serve over 300,000 people in need – many of whom would greatly benefit from the passage of S1829 and S1854.

Senators, we urge you to support S1829 and S1854 as small but important steps in the fight against poverty in New Jersey.

**Representing the Archdiocese of Newark, Diocese of Camden, Diocese of Metuchen,  
Diocese of Paterson, Diocese of Trenton, Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic and  
Our Lady of Deliverance Syriac Catholic Diocese**