



THE ISSUE: 2016 Budget Act/SB 23 *CalWORKs* eligibility (Mitchell, D-Los Angeles) would repeal the Maximum Family Grant rule (MFG) that denies parents additional benefits upon the arrival of another child. **(Support)**

*“Openness to life
is at the center of
true development...
If personal and
social sensitivity in
welcoming a new
life is lost, other
forms of welcome
useful to social life
will dry up.
Welcoming life
tempers moral
energies and
makes people
capable of helping
each other.”*

**—Pope Francis,
Address to Catholic
gynecologists,
September 2013**

HISTORY & BACKGROUND

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program provides cash assistance to families with incomes below the Federal poverty level. The purpose of CalWORKs is to offer income assistance to stabilize families for the well-being of children, address parents’ employment barriers, and to promote job training.

However, in a misguided effort to limit family size of those receiving assistance, the state of California instituted the CalWORKs Maximum Family Grant (MFG), which actually creates an untenable situation for a pregnant woman—stretch the current CalWORKs grant to accommodate another child in the family or possibly consider aborting her unborn baby. It would be in the best interest of the state to grant a pregnant woman, who would qualify for CalWORKs upon the birth of her child, cash assistance throughout her pregnancy to ensure their well-being and prevent them falling into extreme poverty.

CHURCH TEACHING

“We affirm the principle...that society's institutions and policies should be structured so that mothers of young children are not forced by economic necessity to leave their children for jobs outside the home. The nation's social welfare and tax policies should support parents' decisions to care for their own children and should recognize the work of parents in the home because of its value for the family and for society.”

—U.S. Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, no. 207 (1986)

TALKING POINTS

- ▶ The public policy proposed in SB 23 implicates two pillars of Catholic social teaching: reverence for life and economic justice.
- ▶ The current CalWORKs Maximum Family Grant (MFG) rule can pressure poor women to make desperate decisions that endanger the health and safety of their family and the life of an unborn child.
- ▶ The elimination of the MFG will allow an additional child born into a CalWORKs eligible family currently receiving assistance to be added to the count of “needy persons,” thereby increasing the family’s resources by \$133 per month for that child.
- ▶ Offering CalWORKs cash assistance to a needy pregnant woman both acknowledges the humanity of her unborn child and allows her a dignified means to prepare for the birth of her baby.