

MASSACHUSETTS CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
WEST END PLACE

150 Staniford Street, Suite 5, Boston, MA 02114-2511
Phone (617) 367-6060
FAX (617) 367-2767
staff@macathconf.org

May 15, 2008

Senator Steven G. Panagiotakos
Chair, Senate Committee on Ways &
Means
State House, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Robert A. DeLeo
Chair, House Committee on Ways
& Means
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairmen:

We write in support of Line Item 4408-1000, as included in House 4701, the bill proposing the state budget for Fiscal Year 2009 and adopted by the House of Representatives earlier this month. This provision would appropriate state funds to the Emergency Aid to Elders, the Disabled and Children (EAEDC) program, which provides cash and certain medical benefits to about 17,000 income-eligible individuals each year.

We are aware that the House approved the recommendation of the House Ways & Means Committee to increase funding for this program from \$69.9 million in FY 2008 to \$74.8 million in FY 2009. We are also aware that the Senate Ways & Means has recommended an increase to \$71.98 million.

We express our thanks to both Chairman DeLeo and Chairman Panagiotakos and their respective Committees for recognizing the need for a funding increase. We believe that, for the following reasons, the final budget measure should authorize at a minimum the level of financial support passed by the House.

EAEDC is a vital program that serves some of the most vulnerable in the Commonwealth. It helps older persons and persons with disabilities coping with serious medical emergencies, including those affecting mental health. EAEDC assistance enables these persons to afford housing and to have their medical expenses covered while navigating the social security application process.

The program's benefits have not been raised since 1988 and thus the currently allotted amounts fail to provide adequate coverage for basic needs, especially in

light of the recent economic downturn. We are concerned that the level recommended by the Senate Ways & Means Committee may be insufficient to meet anticipated caseload and cost of living increases.

The best measure of a compassionate society is the degree to which it prioritizes the interests of those who require the greatest care. Our support for the EAEDC provision is motivated by this fundamental principle of good government.



Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley
Archbishop
Archdiocese of Boston



Most Rev. George W. Coleman
Bishop
Diocese of Fall River



Most Rev. Timothy A. McDonnell
Bishop
Diocese of Springfield



Most Rev. Robert J. McManus
Bishop
Diocese of Worcester