



Washington State Catholic Conference

The Public Policy Voice of the Bishops of Washington State

WSSCC Newsletter for Catholic Schools

Winter 2025

As the public policy voice of the five bishops of Washington state, the Washington State Catholic Conference (WSSCC) 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.

Legislature is in Session

The 2025-2026 Legislative Session began Jan. 13. Several bills of importance to our Catholic Schools have been proposed and need Catholic Advocacy:

HB 1140: Establishing empowerED scholarships using educational savings accounts. This is perhaps the most important bill for Catholic schools this session. Rep. Couture's proposal would provide parents with state funds in an educational savings account to assist with tuition, uniforms, books, computers, or a host of other costs associated with education, whether in public, private, or home schools. The bill notes that not all families can afford private education, but kids may find success in private schools.



The bill is a long shot this session with the current budget deficit, but legislators need to know that constituents are supportive of this proposal. The WSSCC encourages parents to email their legislators urging that the bill be heard in committee. Share your stories with your legislators of the sacrifices you make to ensure your children have an education appropriate to their needs and how your school supports your students.

HB 1085: Improving school safety by extending penalties for interference by, or intimidation by threat of, force or violence at schools and extracurricular activities and requiring schools to notify the public of such penalties. One of the few bills that applies to both public and private schools, Rep. Schmidt's bill promotes the dignity and sanctity of life by imposing penalties for threats against private school students, teachers and staff at extracurricular or other events.

SB 5007: Supporting students who are chronically absent and at risk of not graduating high school. Though geared to public schools only, the bill includes supports for students who are chronically

absent in an existing state grant program which offers services to students to help ensure better outcomes in school. The WSCC encourages parents in our Catholic schools to advocate for inclusion of private school tuition in the potential supports that could be funded in the building bridges program in recognition that some students may do better in a different school environment.

SB 5115: Creating the Washington dream act service incentive program. The WSCC supports the concept of Sen. Valdez's bill but seeks an amendment. The bill reflects Catholic teaching on the rights of people to participate in their communities by establishing grants for DREAMers to work and volunteer with community organizations. However, it specifically excludes work or volunteer service with religious entities, disadvantaging immigrants who may want to serve with Catholic charities or in our Catholic schools. The WSCC encourages Catholics to contact their legislators and ask that SB 5115 be amended so Catholic charities and schools qualify. The first committee hearing for the bill is on January 16 in the Senate Higher Education committee.

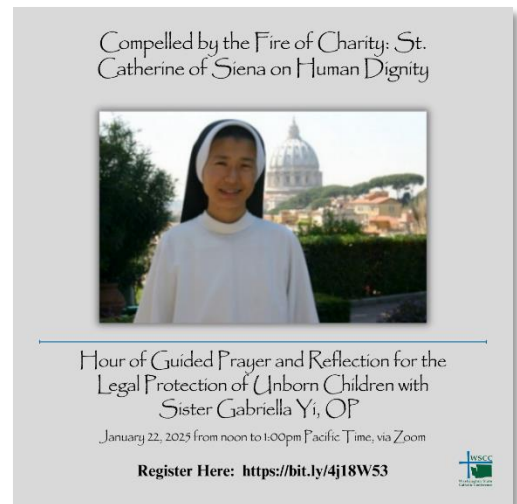
You can find your legislators and their contact information by entering your home address [HERE](#).

[Sign up](#) for our Catholic Advocacy Bulletin to stay informed about these and other bills and for opportunities to advocate for Catholic schools.

Register for Our Jan. 22 Virtual Hour of Guided Prayer and Reflection

Jan. 22 is the National Day of Prayer for Legal Protection of Unborn Children. Join us in an hour of guided prayer and reflection on human dignity with Sr. Gabriella Yi, a Dominican Sister of Saint Cecilia from Nashville and member of the Aquinas College Faculty. In addition to teaching, Sr. Gabriella loves to give talks on the spiritual life and lead retreats, including several at the Archbishop Brunett Retreat Center at the Palisades, as well as at Blessed Sacrament and Holy Family parishes in the Archdiocese of Seattle.

Registration is required and free. Click [HERE](#) to register.



WSCC Staff



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