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LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

To: Joint Committee on Public Health

From: James F. Driscoll, Esq., Executive Director

Re: Senate Bill 1138, "An Act regarding the pediatric palliative care program"

Date: June 2, 2015

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference ("MCC") respectfully submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 1138, "An Act regarding the pediatric palliative care program."

Palliative care services address the physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual needs of patients and their families. This care is specifically provided to individuals who are seriously ill along with support services for the patient and his/her family.

Currently, Massachusetts provides pediatric palliative care services to children and adolescents under the age of 19 years. However, these services are limited to legislative appropriation each year. Statistics have shown that year after year there is a serious deficiency in the appropriation that fund these services.

More specifically, the Hospice and Palliative Federation of Massachusetts report that there are 95 children on a wait list to receive services this year. These children, suffering from various illnesses, are the most vulnerable members of our society. Any child who is sick and suffering should be able to get the help he/she needs and deserves. Children and their families should not have to wait for proper health care due to governmental budgetary constraints.

The MCC urges the Committee to remove the language in the current law which limits these services. Specifically we urge the Committee to remove "subject to appropriation" as detailed in Senate Bill 1138.

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference is the public policy office of the Roman Catholic Bishops in the Commonwealth, representing the Archdiocese of Boston and the Dioceses of Fall River, Springfield, and Worcester.