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INFORMATION AND NEWS RELEASE

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**Mass Catholic Conference Says Yes to Bilingual Ed Reform and
No to Question 2**

During the past decade, our state has been both blessed and challenged by the significant influx of immigrant children. This rapidly growing immigrant population has especially challenged our schools. In fact, one of the most noticeable trends in education has been the dramatic increase in students' linguistic diversity. According to a report from the Department of Education entitled, *18 Largest Minority Groups in Massachusetts*, State residents include recent immigrants from Armenia, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Somalia, Vietnam, and the former Soviet Union.

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference (MCC) is concerned with the vulnerability of immigrant children and their families. In solidarity with all immigrants, we seek what is best for their children. We embrace the view of immigrant parents that regardless of their native language, their children are entitled to an equal opportunity to a quality education. We believe that it is imperative that all immigrant children be given the opportunity to fully develop their academic potential, including proficiency in English, so that they can prosper in their new nation.

To ensure that Massachusetts provides the best quality education for all immigrant children, MCC supports the implementation of the recent bilingual education reforms adopted by the Governor and the Legislature. This new legislation sets in motion much needed changes to bilingual education. Most importantly, it shifts much of the responsibility of designing bilingual programs from the state to the local school districts, maximizing parental input and choice. Parents, teachers, and school administrators need the flexibility to decide which English teaching methods will best serve their schools. As concluded by a recent study conducted by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, "research is clear that there is no single program or method of teaching that is guaranteed to be most effective."

Moreover, the new law enhances accountability by requiring frequent testing of students in English. Also, bilingual teachers will now have to be properly certified and fluent in spoken and written English.

As a result of these newly enacted reforms and the documented adverse effects of the English-immersion only approach, MCC urges the voters to reject Question 2. We believe that Question 2's passage could have far reaching unintended consequences in the Commonwealth, by hurting the very people it is intended to help. It is critical for the academic and social well being of our immigrant children that we successfully teach them English while allowing them to maintain their cultural heritage. As a state, we should welcome and celebrate the cultural diversity of our people. Above all, our children must be treated with dignity and given the opportunity to succeed.

**Massachusetts Catholic Conference is the official public policy voice of the
Roman Catholic Church in the Commonwealth**

Archdiocese of Boston — Dioceses of Fall River, Springfield, Worcester