

March 1, 2005

House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

We understand that the House of Representatives will soon consider HR 27, The Job Training Improvement Act, and that amendments may be offered that are intended to undermine or limit the ability of religious entities receiving job training funds to employ co-religionists and those who share their religious values. We are writing to urge you to oppose any such amendments.

The Catholic Church and other religious entities serve people of all faiths, often the most poor and vulnerable in our society, through education, health, and social services agencies. Many of these agencies receive government funds or government-funded services. Indeed, Catholic programs have been receiving government funds to provide assistance to the poor and needy for more than 150 years. To maintain its very identity, a religious or faith-based organization must be able to consider an individual's religious affiliation and willingness to support the mission and values of the institution when making employment decisions. Congress recognized this need when it passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, by specifically exempting religious employers from the Title VII restrictions on consideration of religion in hiring decisions, and again in 1972 when it clarified the reach of the exemption.

We urge you to oppose any amendment that fails to respect the right of religious service providers to maintain and preserve their identity as they contribute to the common good through their essential services to those in need.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio, PhD, DD
Bishop of Brooklyn
Chairman, Domestic Policy Committee
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Rev. Larry Snyder
President, Catholic Charities

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
Chairperson, Board of Trustees
Catholic Health Association of the United States