



ECONOMIC JUSTICE

THE ISSUE: AB 2269 CalWORKs: eligibility (Lackey, R-Palmdale). This bill extends the CalWORKs program for persons receiving aid until he or she reaches the age of 20, if the recipient is attending school and making satisfactory progress toward graduation or completion of a program as defined by the school. **(SUPPORT)**

“Consideration of justice and equity, however, can at times demand that those involved in civil government give more attention to the less fortunate members of community, since they are less able to defend their rights and to assert their legitimate claims.” – Pope John XXIII, Peace on Earth, No. 56

HISTORY & BACKGROUND

The CalWORKs program aims to break the cycle of poverty. Yet, the current program structure inaccurately excludes benefits from individuals who are pursuing education simply because of his or her age. Currently, CalWORKs program benefits terminate for a person who reaches the age of 18, unless there is evidence that he or she will complete school requirements before turning 19.

Individuals who earn a General Education Development (GED) credential can earn the same level of weekly wages as high school graduates. A GED credential can increase income-earning potential in the job market by roughly \$115 per week, in comparison to individuals with no high school degree or its equivalent. In today’s competitive economy, completing high school or its equivalent is imperative for success. Statistics show that 60 percent of job opportunities in the skilled labor force mandate a high school diploma. AB 2269 will help more people finish high school or earn a GED so that they can compete better in today’s job market.

CHURCH TEACHING

Let us encourage the generosity, which is typical of the young, and help them to work actively in building a better world. Young people are a powerful engine for the Church and for society.

–Pope Francis, *Homily at Basilica of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Conception, Aparecida* (7/24/13)

Be active members! Go on the offensive! Play down the field; build a better world, a world of brothers and sisters, and a world of justice, of love, of peace, of fraternity, of solidarity.

–Pope Francis, *Address at Prayer Vigil with Young People*, (7/27/13)

TALKING POINTS

- ▶ Terminating eligibility of individuals seeking a GED credential based on age, the CalWORKs program is excluding opportunities for those individuals from communities that are most financially impacted.
- ▶ A high school diploma or its equivalent can ensure a socioeconomically disadvantaged individual escapes his or her economic circumstances.
- ▶ Legislation should permit individuals who are seeking a high school degree or its equivalent to pursue education until the age of 20.
- ▶ Without a high school diploma, it can be difficult to pursue postsecondary study or advance a career.