

**Testimony to Cincinnati City Council on Wage Enforcement Ordinance
February 3, 2016**

Mayor Cranley, members of Council, thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Tony Stieritz, and I direct the Catholic Social Action Office of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. On behalf of the Archdiocese, I'm here to express our support for the ordinance before you to address the scourge of wage theft and payroll fraud in our city.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that "A just wage is the legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice.... Remuneration for work should guarantee [a person] the opportunity to provide a dignified livelihood for him [or herself] and family on the material, social, cultural, and spiritual level..." (no. 2434).

I don't believe I need to go much further to make the point that, in our view, God disapproves of employers cheating workers out of their pay. I'm sure that every person in this room wants to see an end to such deceit. Still, we sadly know that wage theft and payroll fraud through the misclassification of employees happens too often in our community. Over the years, the Archdiocese has heard from numerous victims of this abuse, especially immigrants and day laborers. As a faith community, we have a special concern for such vulnerable populations, who have too often been dishonestly threatened by their employers with deportation or termination should they come forward with their complaints.

Clearly state and federal laws against these practices already exist. Yet, the problem persists at an unacceptable level. We applaud the Cincinnati Interfaith Worker Center, other advocate groups, and the members of City Council who have now proposed a very specific way that the City of Cincinnati can make a difference. Using its position as an incentive provider to better screen employers on city supported developments and to obligate all involved parties to report any known violations seems to be a responsible and clear way the city can address this problem which concerns us all.

Thank you.