

**SUBMISSION TO THE SOCIAL SERVICES AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE ON THE
SOCIAL SECURITY (SUBSEQUENT CHILD POLICY REMOVAL) AMENDMENT BILL 2021**

How can we issue solemn declarations on human rights and the rights of children, if we then punish children for the errors of adults? Pope Francis: *Amoris Laetitia*, 2016

The "family cap"-- which allows [denial of] benefits to children born while their family is receiving assistance, violates both pro-life and social justice principles.

United States Catholic Bishops Conference: *Submission on Temporary Assistance to Needy Families*, 2011

1. The Wellington Catholic Commission for Ecology, Justice and Peace supports the removal of the subsequent child policy from the Social Security Act 2018. We support this Bill and wish it to proceed.

Opposition to introduction of subsequent child policy

2. Catholic groups opposed the introduction of measures that penalised or imposed different burdens on beneficiaries who had children coming into their care while receiving a benefit. These were proposed in the 2010 Welfare Working Group papers and subsequent recommendations. Similar measures have been introduced in other jurisdictions, such as the United States, under names such as "family cap" or "additional child" policies. The intention of such measures is to discourage beneficiaries from having children.
3. Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand commented in 2012 when the subsequent child measure was introduced in the Social Security (Youth Support and Work Focus) Amendment Act: "The requirement is clearly intended to put pressure on beneficiaries to prevent births of children. This will inevitably result in some mothers feeling under pressure to have an abortion, or seeing this as a more acceptable outcome than would otherwise be the case. Welfare changes must not discourage the birth of children, or penalise families (including sole parents) for giving birth.... The wellbeing of the child should be at the centre of the decision, rather than arbitrary rules imposed without discretion on all beneficiaries."
4. We oppose all measures which on the surface may appear to be about the behaviour of adults, but in fact primarily penalise children.

Support for removal of subsequent child policy

5. We support recommendation 11 of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG) to remove the subsequent child policy. This currently requires the earlier return of a caregiver to work age for a child born while in receipt of a benefit than for other children. We agree with WEAG's position that this would better support women's role as carers. We also support it because it will provide a fairer and better outcome for many vulnerable children.
6. We therefore support this Bill, which acts on the WEAG recommendation. We would like to speak to the Select Committee in support of our submission.