

27 January 2021

**SUBMISSION TO THE EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE SELECT COMMITTEE
ON THE HOLIDAYS (INCREASING SICK LEAVE) AMENDMENT BILL**

If the virus were to intensify again in a world that is unjust to the poor and vulnerable, then we must change this world... We must act now, to heal the epidemics caused by small, invisible viruses, and to heal those caused by the great and visible social injustices.

Pope Francis: Catechesis "Healing the world", 19 August 2020

1. The Archdiocese of Wellington Ecology, Justice and Peace Commission supports this Bill and wishes it to proceed.
2. We agree with the intention of this Bill to ensure that anyone who is unwell, especially during a time of pandemic, is able to stay at home from work. We agree with the assessment in the Regulatory Impact Statement that with many employers offering only the minimum five days per year, low employment standards may undermine public health objectives.
3. It benefits everyone in society when sick people do not go to work. Individual workers are able to recover more quickly; co-workers and other family members also have better protection; and all together we reduce the spread of infectious disease.
4. We acknowledge that while employers may initially experience the financial costs of increased sick leave, they also will benefit from increased productivity in workplaces as overall sickness drops. More significantly, employers and our wider society are saved from the potential of closures, restrictions and even lockdowns caused if essential workers feel under obligation to work when they are unwell.
5. Overcoming the challenges of the Covid-19 virus, as well as future pandemics likely to come our way in a globalised world, requires us to use every tool at our disposal to protect the health of communities.
6. Increased sick leave, especially for essential workers, is one of those tools. We support legislation to enable that to happen.