



A Blueprint FOR THE Common Good

2019-2020 ADVOCACY PRINCIPLES

“In view of the common good, there is urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialogue in the service of life, especially human life.” —Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 2015

All human beings have dignity and value: men and women, young and old, immigrant and citizen, the sick and the healthy, the prisoner and the victim. Unfortunately, recognizing that worth happens too little within communities. Throughout his papacy, Pope Francis has talked about society’s tendency to adopt a “throwaway” culture, to view everything as disposable, replaceable, or temporary. That tendency has permeated the way individuals treat one another. *Laudato Si*, the Holy Father’s 2015 encyclical (or papal letter), challenges its readers to “regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it.” This is the kind of society worth seeking, engaging, and defending.

The Catholic Church calls for people of faith to love one another in all activities, including politics. Love can be present and felt in all actions “that [seek] to build a better world,” allowing society to see the faces of those in need and recognizing that all are brothers and sisters in a common family, not burdens.¹ Michiganders need a “culture of care;” a culture that treats all people, at every stage of their life, with the respect and love they deserve.

Laws and policies alone do not change culture, but they can set the tone for public discussion. The difficult work of politics must be more than soundbites on the news, more than partisanship, and more than tearing down one another. Government “is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good,” helping citizens fulfill their responsibilities to one another.² At its best, politics is a venue to find solutions, to seek areas of compromise, and, when disagreement exists, to better understand the positions of others. Making good public policy is hard work, but it is work worth doing.

Michigan Catholic Conference (MCC) serves as the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops in Michigan, advocating before the executive, judicial, and especially, the legislative branch of state government. The Conference seeks policies that recognize the value of all people. This **focus** publication details ten guiding principles for staff advocacy at the State Capitol during the 2019-2020 legislative session. When evaluating specific policies that come before the Michigan Legislature, MCC considers the following questions: 1. **Does this policy serve the well-being of people?** 2. **Have the ethical and moral implications of this policy been considered?** 3. **Does this policy affect the institutional Church, her mission, her members, and her works?** ■



HUMAN LIFE & DIGNITY

“Society...must respect, defend and promote the dignity of every human person.”³ Each individual has worth, as St. John Paul II said, “at every moment and in every condition.” That value does not come from age, education, income, or productivity, but is inherent. MCC supports:

- Policies that recognize the value of every person’s life.
- State initiatives that provide and expand alternatives to abortion and assistance to pregnant women, including adoption.
- Measures to limit abortion and promote the safety of women.
- Regulations on research policies which violate the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life.
- Policies that seek to reduce violence in society, including the reduction of gun violence.
- Upholding the constitutional ban on the death penalty and the statutory ban on assisted suicide.
- Policies that expand and improve end-of-life care through a person’s natural death.
- Policies that support the nature of the human person.

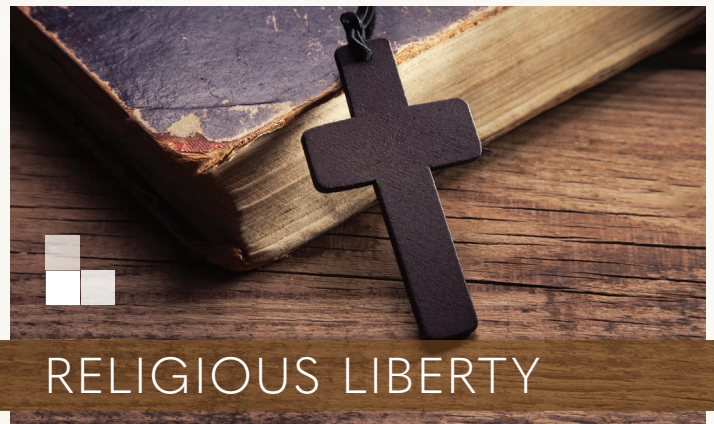


PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR & REGULATORY POLICIES

“The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbors, the more effectively we love them.”⁴ The true measure of a just society is how

well the most vulnerable are faring. Engaging the voices and needs of the poor and vulnerable are critical toward the making of good public policy. MCC advocates for:

- Tax policies that support low-income residents.
- The allocation of state budget resources to provide critical services for vulnerable persons, especially health care, food, and heating assistance.
- Energy policies and regulations which promote competition, support for low-income ratepayers, and foster environmental stewardship.
- Affirmation of the recognized right to exercise religious conscience in the provision of publicly-funded services.
- Maintenance of the tax-exempt status for nonprofit organizations.
- Affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families and individuals.
- Affordable and accessible transportation options for low- and moderate-income workers.
- Regulatory legislation that will protect the faith-based mission of churches and institutions.
- Policies that support fair and adequate working conditions for all employees.
- Policies that foster and promote employment for Michigan residents.



RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

“We are obliged to defend the right to religious liberty for ourselves and for others.”⁵ America guarantees the free *exercise* of religion. This right, which goes beyond the freedom to worship, enhances society. It allows people of all beliefs to participate in the public realm. MCC supports:

- Freedom for faith-based providers, institutions, and all individuals to serve the general public according to their religious tradition and without interference from the government.
- Opposition to government regulations and mandates that violate the long-standing religious practices of faith-based organizations.



EDUCATION

“True education makes us love life, and it opens us to the fullness of life!”⁶ Every child deserves a quality education and a safe learning environment. Parents, as children’s first teachers, should be able to choose the best educational fit for their family. Michiganders benefit from strong schools of all types. MCC advocates for:

- Reimbursement to nonpublic schools for state-mandated, non-instructional services, including policies which protect the health, safety, and well-being of students.
- Maximized opportunities of nonpublic school students to participate in comprehensive shared time services.
- Policies that seek to improve the quality of public education and ensure parental rights within the public school setting.
- State policies which enable Michigan residents to take full advantage of federal school choice programs.
- A requirement that all public school districts have open enrollment policies.
- Protection of nonpublic schools from excessive regulation.
- Continued participation of nonpublic schools in school safety and noncore extra-curricular grant opportunities.
- Adequate funding for the Michigan Tuition Grant and Tuition Incentive Programs.
- Amending Article VIII, Section 2 of the Michigan Constitution to allow the Michigan Legislature greater flexibility for necessary education reforms.
- Policies that foster and promote education and job training for the skilled trades.



CHILDREN & FAMILIES

“As the family goes, so goes the nation, and so goes the whole world in which we live.”⁷ The family, beginning with one man and one woman in marriage, is the cornerstone of society. Supporting healthy marriages and families, as well as protecting against violence, abuse, and other challenges, produces strong communities. MCC supports:

- Promoting the traditional definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman.
- Tax policies that protect and promote the stability of marriage and the institution of the family.
- Policies that strengthen the long-standing relationship between the State of Michigan and nonprofit agencies in the provision of child placement services.
- Amending Michigan’s no-fault divorce laws.
- Policies that combat human trafficking, domestic violence, and abuse of vulnerable persons.



HEALTH CARE

“Health care is a basic human right.”⁸ Access to adequate health care respects the dignity of the human person and allows individuals to survive, develop, and hopefully, reach their full human potential. MCC seeks:

- Protection of health coverage, including preventative care, for low- and moderate-income individuals and families.

- Appropriate Medicaid funding to ensure adequate coverage for recipients and payments to providers.
- Opposition to legislation that threatens the mission of institutional and individual faith-based providers.
- Policies that ensure adequate resources for behavioral and physical health care, including treatment for addictions and substance abuse.



RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

“The dignity of the human person applies to both victim and offender.”⁹ Promoting fairness, accountability, and public safety are critical criminal justice goals. Policies that encourage rehabilitation and healing are also needed. MCC supports:

- Policies that respect crime victims, including provision of just compensation and treatment for their physical and emotional injuries.
- Reforming current policy that automatically charges a seventeen-year-old as an adult in the criminal justice system, regardless of the crime.
- Policies that incentivize intensive probation programming to reduce recidivism.
- Adequate state funding to ensure accused indigent persons receive competent legal representation.
- Comprehensive reentry services to assist the formerly incarcerated to become productive members of society.
- Sentencing guidelines and parole practices that reflect an individual’s potential threat to society.
- Elimination of life without parole sentencing for juveniles convicted as adults.



IMMIGRATION & REFUGEES

“The call to solidarity is also a call to promote the effective recognition of the rights of immigrants.”¹⁰

Michigan has a tradition of welcoming people of diverse origins—including immigrants, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers—who have added to the state’s character. MCC supports policies that:

- Uphold the human dignity of all persons and work against injustices that compromise the dignity of immigrants, including access to state identification.
- Continue to welcome refugees and asylees to the state who have been admitted by the federal government.
- Recognize and promote the values that immigrants provide to Michigan’s culture and economy.



CARE FOR CREATION

“Concern for the environment needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings.”¹¹ The relationship between society and the Earth impacts generations, especially the poor and vulnerable. Environmental decisions benefit from evaluating this impact, community needs, and the availability of resources. MCC aims to:

- Explore opportunities to implement Catholic Social Teaching on the environment in state policy, including access to safe and affordable drinking water and the stewardship of natural resources.



FEDERAL ISSUES



“We seek a civil public square, where all citizens can make their contribution to the common good.”¹³ During election season, Catholics are called to consider candidates based on their platform, character, and ability to influence a given issue. Now that newly elected officials are seated, the Church urges Catholics to continue engaging with those that have been chosen. One way to do so is by joining the Catholic Advocacy Network (CAN), an email system that provides updates on state legislative action and opportunities for advocacy: micatholic.org/can. ■

“[The Church] must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.”¹² MCC primarily advocates before the three branches of state government. Staff, however, will also engage Michigan’s Congressional delegation if requested by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. MCC supports:

- Legislation that extends full legal protection to individuals and institutions regarding conscience rights in health care, child placement services, and employment decisions.
- Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to ensure the equitable participation of nonpublic school students and teachers.
- Expansion of federal school choice policies to benefit Michigan families.
- Legislation that would codify the Deferred Action Against Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program for individuals who were brought to this county when they were children.
- Comprehensive immigration reform that promotes family unity, streamlines the process for legal immigration, includes a path for low-skilled workers to work in the United States, and includes a path toward citizenship for undocumented persons already in the United States. ■

1. *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis, 2015: <https://goo.gl/RSqAQE>
2. Reflection/Action Process, Catholic Charities Twin Cities, 2017: <https://goo.gl/Lqtuqe>
3. *Evangelium Vitae*, St. John Paul II, 1995: <https://goo.gl/VwRLdd>
4. *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict, 2009: <https://goo.gl/yHhr97>
5. “Our First, Most Cherished Liberty,” USCCB, 2012: <https://goo.gl/buvXUL>
6. *Address to Italian Students and Teachers*, Pope Francis, 5/10/2014: <https://goo.gl/yLeN6w>
7. “Homily,” St. John Paul II, 11/30/1986: <https://goo.gl/uyuXWJ>
8. “Health Care Reform,” USCCB, February 2011: <https://goo.gl/RdbgTJ>
9. *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice*, USCCB, 2000: <https://goo.gl/9lp8Fy>
10. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us*, USCCB, 2000: <https://goo.gl/CBwMIF>
11. *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis, 2015: <https://goo.gl/ntNXk9>
12. *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI, 2005: <https://goo.gl/quF3hb>
13. “Our First, Most Cherished Liberty,” USCCB, 2012: <https://goo.gl/buvXUL>

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510 South Capitol Avenue
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For additional free copies of this

focus, please contact us at:

Phone: (800) 395-5565

Email: kmay@micatholic.org

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