

Advocacy Report on the 101st Michigan Legislature

An Analysis of
the 2021–2022
Legislative Session



MICHIGAN
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

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Dear Friends,

Michigan Catholic Conference promotes a social order that respects the dignity of human life and serves the common good. This report details how MCC went about that mission over the past two years that made up the 101st Michigan Legislature.

From fighting expansion of abortion and payday lending, to advocating for undocumented immigrants and nonpublic schools, our priorities transcend party and ideological lines. These efforts flow from the nine advocacy principles outlined in MCC's *Blueprint for the Common Good*, which are informed by Catholic social teaching and grounded in the values of the Gospel, which call us to remember the poor and vulnerable above all else and to uphold the God-given dignity of all people.

MCC staff monitor and review hundreds of introduced bills, work with lawmakers and staff of both parties, before committees, and speak out on MCC's positions to the public through various communication channels. Above all else, this document demonstrates those public policies MCC—as representatives of the Catholic bishops and the Catholic Church in Michigan—supported or stood against.

As we are just one part of the Body of Christ here in Michigan, MCC efforts to advance the mission would not be possible without the prayer, work, and leadership of the bishops and their diocesan staff, as well as parish staff, volunteers, and lay faithful who pray and work to advance the Kingdom of God here in the great state of Michigan.

Sincerely,
Paul A. Long
President and CEO
Michigan Catholic Conference



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul A. Long". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "P".



MCC Policy Advocate Rebecca Mastee addressed hundreds of Catholics about Proposal 3 at the Michigan Catholic Women's Conference, one of many presentations MCC staff gave to Catholic groups throughout the campaign to oppose Proposal 3 and witness to human life.

Photo courtesy Diocese of Lansing

Upholding the Dignity of Human Life

The Church proclaims all human life, from conception to natural death, is sacred and worthy of protection. Every life is a gift from God and worthy of dignity and respect regardless of a person's age, ability, or stage of development. Because the right to life is necessary for securing all other human rights, Michigan Catholic Conference prioritizes supporting policies that uphold the dignity of human life and opposes policies that diminish human life.

MCC Leads Statewide Push to Combat Unlimited Abortion

In partnership with a coalition of pro-life organizations and the arch/dioceses, MCC helped lead the statewide fight against Proposal 3, the “reproductive freedom” ballot proposal that enshrined unrestricted, abortion-on-demand and more into the state constitution.

MCC took a leadership role at every stage of the campaign, including fundraising, research, strategy, providing input into television ads, promoting earned media efforts, and more. MCC staff drafted press releases, prepared op-ed pieces for mass distribution, and helped coordinate an anti-Proposal 3 press conference at the Capitol. MCC staff also worked to schedule interviews for the campaign spokesperson with print, radio, and television media outlets.

MCC, along with diocesan pro-life and communication offices, spearheaded the creation of a statewide action plan for Catholic arch/dioceses and parishes with the goal of educating every Catholic about Proposal 3 and to urge them to vote no. This was accomplished by developing a comprehensive packet of ed-

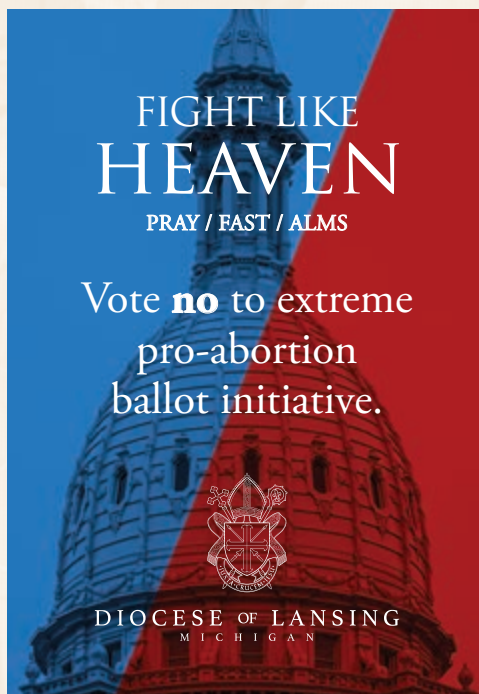
ucational materials for distribution to parishes, schools, and Catholic institutions. An informational website hosting the Proposal 3 materials was accessed tens of thousands of times.

MCC initiated a joint bishops' letter urging a no vote on Proposal 3 that was mailed to more than 260,000 registered Catholic households. Through the campaign, MCC staff made presentations to diocesan clergy and dozens of parishes and groups from every arch/diocese. MCC staff also participated in door-to-door canvassing activities coordinated by Right to Life of Michigan and Protect Life Michigan.

While Michigan voters approved the proposal during the November election, MCC's effort to actively engage and inform Catholics about Church teaching on life and its opposition to Proposal 3 was effective in terms of the reach of the statewide action plan. A coordinated and active partnership with diocesan staff and parishes made this possible. Post-election polling conducted of self-identified Catholics who voted in the election showed

that 92% said they had received a lot of information about Proposal 3, and a plurality of 38% said they were more likely to vote against the proposal as a result. Post-election polling indicated that nearly 80 percent of Catholics who attend Mass regularly voted against Proposal 3, with an analysis of the data concluding that Proposal 3 motivated Mass-going Catholics to participate in the election.

Despite the overwhelming witness of the Catholic Church in support of life, Michigan regrettably was not immune to the national response to the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs* that overturned *Roe v. Wade*, which returned abortion policy to the states and prompted many citizens across the country to vote in support of legal protection for abortion rights. Proposal 3 passed 57-43.



Above: The rallying cry of “Fight Like Heaven” was adopted by the Diocese of Lansing and many other Catholics in the grassroots effort to defeat Proposal 3. **Below:** Parishioners at St. Mary in Williamston participate in door-to-door canvassing as part of the grassroots efforts by the faithful to defeat Proposal 3.

Photos courtesy Diocese of Lansing



News release published June 24, 2022 in response to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in favor of human life and overturning *Roe v. Wade* in the case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*.



cthl.cc/jkjljg

Catholic Bishops in Michigan Release Statement Celebrating Life, Reaffirm Support for Mothers in Need Following *Dobbs* Decision

‘Every pregnant woman should know there is a community of compassion and support waiting to help her and her unborn or infant child.’



(Lansing, Mich.)—Following today’s momentous and historic ruling from the Supreme Court of the United States in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* that overturns the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision—which to this day has resulted in the tragic loss of some 63 million unborn children nationally and more than 1.5 million children in Michigan—the eleven Catholic bishops in the state of Michigan have released a joint statement that expresses joy with the Court’s majority opinion while reaffirming the Catholic Church’s compassion and support for mothers in need.

In their statement, the bishops proclaim that life is a God-given right while reaffirming the Catholic Church’s commitment to support mothers during and after their pregnancies. They further clarify that the work to build up a culture of life must continue, particularly considering efforts to impose unregulated abortion in Michigan and across the country have already begun.

Catholic Bishops in Michigan Statement Following *Dobbs* Decision

Nearly fifty years after the unjust decision in *Roe v. Wade*, our country draws closer to a society that recognizes the God-given right of life for all persons, at any stage or in any condition. While today's ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* that overturns *Roe* is a cause for joy, we must remember that life is and always will be a gift from our Creator; it cannot be given or taken by governmental structures, judges, or elected officials.

We are saddened by the fear and anger that has reverberated across our land since a draft of this opinion was leaked to the public. In light of these concerns, we wish to make clear that no woman should face pregnancy alone. With safe-delivery laws, adoption, pregnancy resource centers, and assistance from Catholic and other agencies that provide necessities for mom and baby, every pregnant woman should know there is a community of compassion and support waiting to help her and her unborn or infant child. We empathize with women who struggle with daily challenges that may affect their decision to carry their baby to term: financial insecurity, food insecurity, medical care, lack of relationship and/or family support, coercion, and homelessness, just to name a few.

The pro-life movement must redouble its efforts to ensure every woman has the support she needs throughout her pregnancy and beyond, whether she chooses to parent or create an adoption plan. We affirm that the Church must prioritize this work, through our Catholic Charities and parish-based support networks, to meet the physical needs of mothers and children as well as offer the emotional support and love new mothers need. We also implore men to be respectful of women and responsible when they father a child. We are all called to walk with moms in need, and we encourage all Michiganders to join us in this effort.

Today's momentous decision would not have occurred without fifty years of prayer, action and witness from innumerable women and men who promote the sanctity of human life. These people of goodwill laid the foundation for a future of love, compassion, and support toward women and their unborn or newborn children.

The joint statement was signed by the eleven Catholic bishops in Michigan: **Most Rev. Allen H. Vigneron**, Archbishop of Detroit, **Most Rev. Earl A. Boyea**, Bishop of Lansing, **Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley**, Bishop of Kalamazoo, **Most Rev. John F. Doerfler**, Bishop of Marquette, **Most Rev. Robert D. Gruss**, Bishop of Saginaw, **Most Rev. David J. Walkowiak**, Bishop of Grand Rapids, **Most Rev. Jeffrey J. Walsh**, Bishop of Gaylord, **Most Rev. Gerard W. Battersby**, Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit, **Most Rev. Arturo Cepeda**, Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit, **Most Rev. Robert J. Fisher**, Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit, and **Most Rev. Donald F. Hanchon**, Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit.

Though *Roe* is no longer relevant to abortion policy, we must remain vigilant against future attempts to promote abortion as help for women, which in reality are attacks on human life itself. Some of those attacks have already started here in Michigan through the legislative process, at the ballot box and in the court room, signaling that the work to build up a social order that respects human life is not finished.

Let us, as the Body of Christ here on Earth, pray for all pregnant women and continue to proclaim that human life is sacred from conception to natural death and at every point in between, and to commit ourselves to building a society grounded in that essential God-given right.

###

Below: Kim Houseman, director of Christian service for St. Anastasia Parish in Troy, left, and Andrea Spankie, director of Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan's Walking with Moms in Need initiative, show off the Archdiocese of Detroit's "traveling crib" for collecting baby supply donations. The initiative is just one example of how Catholic Charities and parishes work to support mothers in need.

Photo courtesy Daniel Meloy, Detroit Catholic





Students affected by the Oxford High School shooting in 2021 found solace at nearby St. Joseph Catholic Church, where many gathered the evening of the shooting for the parish's regularly scheduled Tuesday evening liturgy. The Church, through its advocacy, also serves as a voice for change in times of crisis by supporting measures that reduce gun violence.

Photo courtesy Detroit Catholic

In the Wake of Tragedies, MCC Reiterates Call to Safe Gun Policies

The prevalence of gun violence in our country has continued over the past two years. This was true in Michigan, which witnessed the horror of a mass shooting at Oxford High School in November 2021 that resulted in the death of four students and the injuring of seven others.

MCC, along with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at the federal level, has long advocated for common-sense gun reforms to promote safety and protection of life while respecting the right to responsible gun ownership.

Support was offered by MCC this session to legislation that prescribes penalties for gun

owners who fail to store their firearms safely if a child obtains access to a weapon and displays it or uses it in a public setting.¹ While the legislation did not advance, MCC helped publicize the issue by publishing columns in both a Catholic and secular publication calling for more action on preventing gun violence.

MCC also testified in opposition to a bill that would allow concealed pistol holders to carry their guns hidden—instead of out in the open—in churches and schools. The bill did not make it out of committee this session.²

1. SBs 550–553.

2. HB 5367, sponsored by Rep. Beau LaFave.

Op-ed published June 30, 2022 in *Bridge Michigan* that tied the issues of abortion and gun violence to the overall prevalence of violence in society.



cthl.cc/wnr1m

Photo: Grieving students gather at a memorial for their classmates who died in the Oxford High School shooting in 2021. The tragedy prompted calls for addressing gun violence and school safety in Michigan, reforms that MCC supports and has advocated for.

Photo courtesy
Detroit Catholic

Opinion | Catholic Conference: Michigan should oppose death by guns and abortion



We live in a society overrun by violence.

Each day in our country, innocent lives are being gunned down, whether in mass shootings or in the many gun deaths that do not make the news.

And each day in our country, innocent lives are intentionally ended before they are born.

Whether it's death by gun or abortion, both are violence that attack the dignity of human life, which is the "foundation of a moral vision for society."

Holding human life as sacred means regarding any loss of life as a tragedy. In Michigan, the four children shot dead in their high school in Oxford last year are of equal worth as each of the more than 1.5 million children whose lives ended in abortion in Michigan since *Roe v. Wade* was decided.

And yet too many people don't see this connection between guns and abortion. Finding common ground on both issues starts with recognizing their common threat to human life, which we should hold in the highest regard.

Now that *Roe* is overturned and abortion regulation returns to the states, there has been a renewed push to either preserve or increase abortion access, including in Michigan. But allowing more intentional killing of unborn human babies in the womb should never be seen as a solution.

Public officials should put the same effort they put into preserving abortion into supporting pregnant women so they don't feel abortion is the answer to concerns they have about how to support themselves and their children.

"We are all called to walk with moms in need, and we encourage all Michiganders to join us in this effort," the Catholic

bishops in Michigan said in their joint statement in response to the overturning of *Roe*.

That would mean putting state funding into pregnancy centers, which provide free help to pregnant women before and after birth. It would mean helping pregnant women know adoption is a valid option. It also means promoting the state's safe delivery law, which allows new mothers to safely turn over their children for adoption to uniformed employees of hospitals, fire departments, police stations, or to an emergency medical technician or paramedic.

As for gun violence, Michigan Catholic Conference and the U.S. Catholic bishops have long supported common sense regulations on firearms. We also recognize more gun regulations are not the only way to curb gun violence, and we recognize that addressing mental health, school safety and a host of other factors play a role in the conversation.

But that conversation must include the guns themselves. That is why it is encouraging that lawmakers recently came together on a bipartisan deal to address gun reform cleared both chambers of Congress and was signed into law by President Joe Biden.

The legislation, backed by the U.S. bishops, strengthens background checks, provides funding to help schools prevent violence, and enhances state crisis intervention programs, including extreme risk protection orders, otherwise known as red flag laws.

Just as Congress has come together to recognize gun safety as an issue that we all must work to address, the same should happen for lawmakers in Michigan.

In Michigan, there is no legal requirement for gun owners to lock their guns away from children. However, bills to fix that, and proscribe penalties to parents whose children access the gun and are caught with it or use it to hurt others, have gone nowhere. State lawmakers should come together to pass needed reforms to address gun violence by regulating access to guns.

We believe bipartisan cooperation should occur on any issue that affects human life, whether it's gun safety or preventing abortions. Guns and abortion have become political issues, but they don't have to be if we recognize them as forms of violence to be opposed by all people of goodwill.

Let us come together to protect and value all human life from conception to natural death, and thus reject all forms of violence against human persons. We look forward to the day when our society and elected officials hold the sanctity of every human life in greater esteem than partisanship or politics.

###

Other Highlights in Upholding the Dignity of Human Life

MCC also supported legislation that would:

- Provide \$4 million in grant funding in the state budget for nonprofit agencies that distribute diapers free of charge.³
- Repeal taxes on diapers.⁴
- Fund pregnancy centers and assist pregnant students.⁵
- Ban the use of tissue taken from aborted children in research.⁶
- Create a tax exemption that can be claimed for unborn children.⁷
- Expand what information must be provided to women prior to having an abortion, such as the opportunity to hear the child's heartbeat, information about abortion pill reversal, and information about support services for families who have received a poor prenatal diagnosis for the baby.⁸



Emily Fitzgerald, a parishioner at St. Thecla Parish in Clinton Township, volunteers at the Lennon Pregnancy Center's clothing closet. MCC advocacy efforts sought to support and assist pregnancy centers in their crucial mission to serve mothers in need.

Photo courtesy Valaurian Waller, Detroit Catholic

3. The funding provision was included in HB 5783, which provides general state appropriations for FY 2023, but was vetoed by the Governor.

4. HBs 5611–5612, sponsored by Rep. Julie Alexander, did not become law this session.

5. The funding provision was included in SB 845, which provides school appropriations for FY 2023, but was vetoed by the Governor.

6. HBs 5558 and 5559, sponsored by Rep. Thomas Albert and Bronna Kahle, respectively, were vetoed by the Governor.

7. HB 4644, sponsored by Rep. Rodney Wakeman, did not become law this session.

8. HB 5086, sponsored by Rep. Sue Allor, did not become law this session.

MCC also conducted the following activities in support of human life:

- Hosted the first-ever “Empowering Women, Strengthening Communities” event on the Capitol lawn that brought together pregnancy resource centers, adoption agencies, and maternity homes to showcase to state lawmakers the services they provide to pregnant women, new moms, and adoptive families in their communities.
- Helped to provide a legal defense for the state’s existing prohibition on abortion after it was challenged in court.



Left to right: MCC Policy Advocate Paul Stankewitz, state Sen. Ed McBroom, state Sen. Michael MacDonald, and MCC Policy Advocate Rebecca Mastee at the inaugural “Empowering Women, Strengthening Communities” event on the Capitol lawn that showcased the work of pregnancy resource centers, adoption agencies, and maternity homes.

Op-ed published May 26, 2022 in *The Detroit News* that showcased how Catholic Charities support mothers and children in need.



cthl.cc/eubae

Opinion: How pro-life Catholic charities are materially supporting women, babies



As a mother of one struggling to put food on the table, Tee'aira Adams, 30, said when she became pregnant a second time, abortion was “one of the options that I considered taking.”

“You don't think your child will have everything that they need,” she said. “And that's why abortion is such a big deal for most families, because you don't want to bring another life into the earth if you can't provide for that life.”

But she didn't follow through with that option. Instead, she gave birth to a set of twins: Emorie and Sabrina, joining their older sister, Jasmine.

When Tee'aira Adams was considering abortion, Caring Network staff told her she had other options if she carried the pregnancy to term, such as adoption, Kanclerz writes.

What changed for Adams? She attributed it to her connection to Caring Network — a ministry dedicated to serving mothers in need and supported by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Kalamazoo—which she encountered during her first pregnancy.

When Adams was considering abortion, Caring Network staff told her she had other options if she carried the pregnancy to term, such as adoption.

“With them saying no matter what I choose, I would still have their support, that really helped and it gave me comfort and I decided to keep my children,” she said.

Caring Network is one example of how the Catholic Church, through its social service providers and parish-based ministries, accompanies mothers through pregnancy, birth and parenthood. The church has a heart for both mother and her baby, because all human life is sacred and should be protected from conception to natural death.

That heart for mothers and babies isn’t just talk: Catholics are continually helping mothers in difficult situations. At Caring Network, physical needs—food, clothes and more—are available to mothers. There’s a shower, bathroom, kitchen and laundry room free for use, along with a pantry with maternity and children’s clothes, hygienic products and cleaning supplies.

But support is not limited to material needs. Caring Network offers childbirth, breastfeeding and parenting classes. When Adams walked into Caring Network for her first pregnancy, she said, “I didn’t know what I was going to do ... how do you take care of a baby?” But with its support, “I was able to learn, OK, what does it take to be a good mother?”

Many Catholic Charities across Michigan offer direct services to mothers, whether it’s pregnancy counseling, baby supply pantries or helping place children through adoption.


For Adams, Caring Network has “done everything” to help meet her needs. When they arranged childcare so she could complete job training, “I cried, because I was so grateful,” Adams said, who is now in cosmetology school and running her own small business.

With the prospect that the Supreme Court could overturn *Roe v. Wade* and limit access to abortion in many places—including Michigan—fear and anger has reverberated across the country.

But with safe-delivery laws, adoption, pregnancy resource centers and assistance from agencies that provide necessities for mom and baby, every pregnant woman should know there is a community of compassion waiting to help her.

While pregnancy can be overwhelming, women never need to face it alone. That’s a commitment the Catholic Church, local Catholic agencies and pregnancy resource centers offer to mothers.

###



Right: Tee'aira Adams is pictured with her three daughters at the Caring Network building in Kalamazoo. Caring Network is an outreach for mothers and families in need sponsored by the Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo. Tee'aira has credited the support and resources provided by Caring Network for helping her to choose life for her daughters





Volunteers help with the Bread of Life Food Program, a food distribution program developed and operated by Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo, which provides supplemental food to those in need and does so regardless of income level. The Bread of Life Food Program is an example of the Church's social teaching principle of seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Photo courtesy Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo

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Providing for the Poor and Vulnerable

Modeled on the teaching of Christ himself, Catholics strive to keep the needs of the poor at the forefront. The Church is the largest non-governmental provider of social services in the United States. That reach is no different in Michigan, thanks to the work of the various Catholic Charities agencies and local parishes in every corner of the state. To support these crucial works of mercy by the Church, MCC sought to advance policies to address poverty and to ensure the basic needs of the poor were met.

Effort to Deliver Tax Relief to Working Poor Pushes Forward

MCC has been a long-time advocate for maintaining and expanding the state's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), widely considered an example of successful policy for lifting low-income families out of poverty.

During this session, MCC was among the leaders of a diverse coalition of more than 80 business and antipoverty groups supporting legislation to eventually increase the EITC from 6% to 30% of the federal credit.⁹ This would represent a substantial increase in the direct benefit for working low-income families.

As part of its advocacy, MCC testified in support of the legislation at a Senate committee meeting, participated in a coalition press con-

ference, and co-authored an op-ed arguing for passage of the bill, in addition to a *Word from Lansing* column. MCC also engaged grassroots members of the Catholic Advocacy Network to urge lawmakers and the Governor to pass the EITC, with more than 600 messages being sent as a result.

While the EITC expansion did not pass this session, the Governor and lawmakers of both parties have all publicly backed an expansion of the EITC, and it is expected the EITC could be expanded as part of ongoing talks regarding the state's excess COVID funds and surplus state funds that have not been spent.

9. SB 417, sponsored by Sen. Wayne Schmidt.



Tom Hickson, vice president for public policy and advocacy for MCC, testified during a legislative committee hearing in support of legislation that would provide consumer protections for those who use payday loans. MCC's advocacy is guided by the principle of protecting the vulnerable and low-income people who use these services.

Expansion of Predatory Lending Practices Fails to Advance

MCC was successful again this session in keeping the expansion of payday lending practices from becoming law. MCC has continually opposed expansions to payday lending, given its predatory nature in trapping vulnerable people into a cycle of debt.

Joining forces with other antipoverty groups, MCC opposed new legislation¹⁰ this session that would expand payday lending and moved quickly to secure no votes and testify against it when a committee hearing was abruptly scheduled on the issue.

MCC also encouraged members of the Catholic Advocacy Network to directly contact their elected officials to urge opposition to the bill. More than 300 messages from grassroots members were sent to lawmakers, and the sec-

ond-most messages were sent to the bill sponsor himself. The bill ultimately never advanced from committee.

MCC also testified in support of legislation that would provide consumer protections for those who do use payday loans. One bill would establish a 30-day cooling-off period for those who take out payday loans and implement “ability to repay” considerations. These provisions would help protect those struggling with financial hardship from falling further into debt.¹¹

Another bill would require the state’s insurance regulator to produce and submit reports to the Legislature about the payday lending industry to keep track of who uses them, how often, fee amounts, and more.¹²

10. HB 4004, sponsored by Rep. Matt Hall.

11. HB 4515, sponsored by Rep. William Sowerby, did not become law this session.

12. HB 4828, sponsored by Rep. Cara Clemente, did not become law this session.

Other Highlights in Providing for the Poor and Vulnerable

MCC also supported policies and legislation that:

- Maintains state funding for the annual clothing allowance for children in need.¹³
- Preserves the Heat and Eat program to assist eligible low-income residents with energy and food costs.¹⁴
- Keeps funding for per diem bed rate for emergency homeless shelter programs.¹⁵
- Funds caseworkers who help provide immediate assistance like food and clothing to child trafficking survivors and children removed from dangerous environments.¹⁶
- Expands access to affordable, healthier housing options that are easier on the environment.¹⁷
- Incentivizes charitable giving to homeless shelters, food kitchens and food banks by creating a tax credit.¹⁸



Photo courtesy Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo

Catholic Charities
Diocese of Kalamazoo
Hope through Faith and Love
(269) 819-3578

13. Spending provision included in both the FY 2022 and 2023 state budgets.

14. Spending provision included in both the FY 2022 and 2023 state budgets.

15. Spending provision included in both the FY 2022 and 2023 state budgets.

16. Spending provision included in both the FY 2022 and 2023 state budgets.

17. MCC joined a coalition in support of a \$1.65 billion plan to improve access to affordable housing.

18. SB 113, sponsored by Sen. Jim Runestad, did not end up becoming law this session.



Melissa and Chad Buck, adoptive parents of five children with special needs, were successful in their suit against the state, which allowed Lansing-based St. Vincent Catholic Charities to continue to place adoptions according to the tenets of the Catholic faith. Their story and the work of St. Vincent is an example of the importance of preserving the freedom to serve according to religious beliefs.

Photo courtesy Becket Law

Protecting Religious Liberty and the Freedom to Serve

The state and federal constitutions protect the right of religious organizations to operate according to their beliefs and to do so in the public square, and MCC works to make sure that right is upheld for all. Our Catholic faith informs the charitable work undertaken by parishes and service agencies to feed the poor, place children for adoption and to help immigrants and refugees. Whether in the legislative or judicial arenas this past session, MCC advocated for the protection of the right of faith-based organizations to serve others freely.

Proposal to Change Definition of Religion Defeated

Thanks in part to efforts from MCC, a citizens initiative that would have restricted the ability for religious organizations to provide humanitarian aid and social services in the public square was not successful.

The state ruled that a petition sponsored by the group Fair and Equal Michigan did not collect enough valid signatures to be certified and sent to the Legislature for consideration. A contributing factor to that conclusion was a challenge to the validity of the signatures submitted by the coalition group Citizens for Equality Fairness and Justice, of which MCC was a part.

MCC opposed the petition because it included an unprecedented and likely unconstitutional provision to define religion only as the

beliefs of an individual, which would have had a crushing impact on the poor of Michigan by harming many Christian, Muslim, and Jewish organizations who daily and outwardly express their faith as a way of life out of love for their neighbor.

The petition would have also revised the definition of “sex” in state law to include gender identity and sexual orientation. Because the Church teaches that males and females are made in the image and likeness of God and are biologically different from one another, the proposal would likely label as “discriminatory” religious teaching that differentiates between the two genders. That could have led to the exclusion of faith-based organizations from provid-

ing medical and social services for Michigan’s neediest citizens.

Despite the successful effort in blocking this initiative, the Michigan Supreme Court later ruled to redefine the definition of sex in state law to include sexual orientation and gender identity. MCC filed an amicus brief in the case arguing that taking such action would usurp the Legislature’s role in the democratic

process, present constitutional problems for people of faith, and place in jeopardy religious persons and entities who wish to serve others in the public square.

As a result of the Supreme Court ruling, two parishes in Michigan have filed suit against the state to preserve their First Amendment rights to operate according to the teachings of the Catholic faith.

Catholic Conference Responds to Michigan Supreme Court Decision in *Rouch World*

Court’s Majority Opinion May Present Constitutional Religious Liberty Problems



(Lansing, Mich.)—Yesterday the Michigan Supreme Court issued a 5-2 ruling in *Rouch World v. Department of Civil Rights* that interprets the meaning of the word “sex” in the state’s Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act (ELCRA) to include “sexual orientation,” a decision Michigan Catholic Conference had argued in an amicus brief would usurp the legislature’s role in the democratic process, present constitutional problems for people of faith, and place in jeopardy religious persons and entities who wish to serve others in the public square. In response to the Court’s ruling, Michigan Catholic Conference offers the following comment:

“The Michigan Supreme Court’s decision in *Rouch World v. Department of Civil Rights* redefined the meaning of the phrase “because of sex” in the state’s Elliott-Larsen

News release published July 29, 2022 that raised concerns about religious liberty after the Michigan Supreme Court decision in *Rouch World v. Department of Civil Rights*.



cthl.cc/gqabl

Civil Rights Act to encompass sexual orientation. MCC filed an amicus brief in support of the plaintiff's right to act in the public square according to their religious beliefs that marriage is between a man and a woman. In that brief, MCC presented an argument rooted in the text of the statute and the separation of powers doctrine that the legislature is the body charged by the Michigan Constitution with creating and amending state laws. Lawmaking through this process permits people of diverse beliefs to cooperate in crafting laws that simultaneously protect both vulnerable persons and the conscience rights of Michigan residents.

“The majority opinion in *Rouch World* expressly does not address whether enforcement under the ELCRA for alleged sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination would violate federal and state constitutional religious liberty protections. As Justice Viviano properly observed in his dissenting opinion, there are ‘strong arguments’ that the majority’s interpretation of the ELCRA poses constitutional problems relating to religious liberty.

“Michigan Catholic Conference promotes public policies that protect conscience rights and the freedom for religious entities and individual persons to serve others, particularly those in need and those living on the economic margins. We profess that marriage is the union of one man and one woman united through life and open to the birth of children, even as society and culture has recently moved in a historically different direction. Christians are not called to conform to the culture, but to speak to it with truth and love.

“The Catholic Church teaches that all people deserve to be treated with respect and compassion. We urge citizens throughout their daily lives to approach and speak to one another in ways that acknowledge their inherent dignity, as every human person has been created in God’s image and likeness.

“We will continue to advocate for religious liberty rights and seek to uphold constitutional principles that provide legal protections for those who serve others in the public square—particularly the poor and vulnerable—according to their religious mission.”

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Other Highlights in Protecting Religious Liberty and the Freedom to Serve

MCC also took the following actions to protect religious liberty:

- Advocated against proposed state regulations that would have negatively impacted faith-based child-caring institutions, like homes for expectant teen mothers, which resulted in the state withdrawing the regulations.
- Published a column and issued a press statement that highlighted the legal victory secured by St. Vincent Catholic Charities against the state that allowed the agency to continue its work in placing adoptions according to its Catholic beliefs.

Catholic Conference Praises Unanimous SCOTUS Decision to Protect Religious Liberty Rights

(Lansing, Mich.)—Today the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously 9-0 in *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia* that faith-based agencies providing child placement services in the public square with fidelity to their religious teachings are constitutional exercises and, as such, may continue providing those services within their faith tradition. Michigan Catholic Conference is praising the Court's protection of religious liberty rights and is grateful for the work of faith-based agencies, Catholic Charities in particular, for their Gospel-mandated mission to exercise their 'love of neighbor' toward poor and vulnerable persons.

“The exercise of Christian charity in the public square is healthy both for souls and for communities alike. Acts of kindness and service born out of Christ’s command to love our neighbor inform charitable works, particularly for the benefit of the poor and those in need. We

News release published June 17, 2021 in response to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in favor of religious liberty in the *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia* case.



cchl.cc/jydop



applaud today's unanimous ruling from the nation's highest court to protect religious liberty rights and the presence of Catholic institutions in the public square," said **David Maluchnik, MCC Vice President for Communications.**

"The Court's ruling in *Fulton* is a reminder that, as the history of this state and nation commenced, religious orders and missionary clergy began formation of what is now, aside from the government, the country's largest provider of health care, education, child placement services, and humanitarian aid for refugees, the homeless and hungry, and many other vulnerable populations. Faith-based aid providers and employees carry out their works of charity and love because it is compelled by faith and service toward others. Religiously affiliated adoption and foster care providers are leaders in their communities and the best in their field. For over 80 years, their services have been provided in Michigan with collaboration from state agencies to help foster children move into permanent homes and families.

"Today's unanimous ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court, which should support upholding the Michigan child placement policy enacted in 2015 that protects religious liberty rights and diversity in child placement, recognizes that Catholic humanitarian aid and child placement providers are good for communities."

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Photo courtesy Becket Law

Catholic school children attend the Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit at Saint Mary Cathedral in Lansing to mark the new school year.

Photo courtesy Diocese of Lansing



Supporting Students, Schools, and Parents

Parents are the first and primary educators of their children. Guided by this principle, MCC promotes policies to empower parents to determine their children's education. MCC also supports the improvement of all schools in recognition that quality education opportunities contribute to the common good. Part of that mission is MCC's continued efforts to ensure that nonpublic schools—such as Catholic schools and other types of nonpublic schools—have fair access to state and federal funding opportunities.

MCC Mobilizes Catholic Support of Scholarships for Low-Income Students

A pair of citizen-initiated petitions to increase education choice by creating a scholarship program for low-income students garnered enough signatures for state consideration, thanks in part to MCC efforts to coordinate and encourage petition-gathering by Catholic parishes and schools.

The Let MI Kids Learn ballot committee sponsored the initiative to create the Student Opportunity Scholarship program and an accompanying tax credit proposal to pay for the scholarships. Under the proposal, low-income families could apply for the scholarships to receive direct aid to pay for a variety of education expenses for their children, including both public and nonpublic school students. The scholarships would be funded by donors who receive a tax credit for their donation to the scholarship funds.

MCC, along with the Michigan Association of Nonpublic Schools (MANS), provided guidance to Catholic parishes, schools, and MANS member schools about collecting signatures. The campaign mailed or delivered petition forms to parishes and schools, and MCC staff provided addresses for this effort, assisted with the packaging, delivery organization, and delivery of forms. MCC staff worked with the campaign, diocesan coordinators, and parish contacts to provide sample bulletin insert/flyers and letters to parents. MCC also published a column advocating participation in the petition drive and continually urged members of the Catholic Advocacy Network to get involved.

Let MI Kids Learn submitted signatures needed for certification to the state in August 2022, with more than 1 million signatures collected between the two petitions. However, the

state Legislature changed party control before the state could review and send the proposal to the Legislature for approval. Because the proposal was unlikely to pass under the new

legislative leadership, the proposal committee chose to withdraw the signatures from consideration

Below: Paul Stankewitz, policy advocate for MCC, along with Catholic school leaders from the Archdiocese of Detroit and the Diocese of Grand Rapids, gathered in Washington, D.C. to advocate for Catholic schools in Michigan before the state's congressional delegation.



Securing Budget Support for Nonpublic Schools

MCC continued its advocacy this session for equitable resources to be included for nonpublic schools in state budget decisions.

Over the most recent legislative cycle, MCC ensured millions of dollars were included for nonpublic schools, such as school safety grants for nonpublic schools to improve security.¹⁹ Funding to reimburse nonpublic schools for state mandates related to health and safety were included in the budget,²⁰ as well as resources to provide for dual enrollment opportunities in college courses for nonpublic high school students.

Also making its way into the most recent budget were \$10,000 Future Educator fellowships for public and nonpublic high school

graduates attending public or private college teacher prep programs, and \$9,600 student teacher stipends paid to the public or private college teacher prep programs to offset costs of student teachers working in public schools.²¹

MCC also was a voice for nonpublic schools in the process of appropriating federal COVID school aid by assisting Catholic schools across the state with accessing these funds by helping them through the application process.

MCC called attention to the important role Catholic schools played in providing in-person education during the COVID pandemic in a *Word from Lansing* column as part of its advocacy for nonpublic schools to have equitable access to COVID aid.

Other Highlights in Supporting Students, Schools, and Parents

MCC also supported policies and legislation that:

- Provide funding to research the root causes of violence in schools.
- Ensures Catholic and other nonpublic schools are included in receiving state-provided packets about dual enrollment and other post-graduation opportunities for students.²²
- Includes Catholic and nonpublic schools in legislation that set aside funding for schools and childcare centers to purchase water filtration devices.²³
- Allows more flexibility toward qualifying for educational assistance like scholarships or the tuition grant program by permitting scholastic achievement as an alternative to getting a requisite score on a standardized test.²⁴

19. Spending provision included in both the FY 2022 and 2023 school spending budgets.

20. Spending provision included in both the FY 2022 and 2023 school spending budgets.

21. Spending provisions included in the FY 2023 school spending budget.

22. HB 4953, sponsored by Rep. David Martin, was signed into law.

23. SBs 184 and 185, sponsored by Sen. Curtis VanderWall and Sen. Jim Ananich, respectively, did not become law but funding was made available for water filtration devices in a supplemental spending bill.

24. HB 4055, sponsored by Rep. Sarah Anthony; and HB 4056, sponsored by Rep. Scott VanSingel; were signed into law.



More than 35 stylists, braiders, beauticians, and barbers across West Michigan volunteered their time to offer haircuts, styles, and braiding to the foster children in the care of Catholic Charities West Michigan during their second annual Confident Kids event. Caring for foster kids and placing them for adoption is one example of Catholic agencies' ministry to children and families.

Photo courtesy Catholic Charities West Michigan

Strengthening Marriages and Families

The family is the building block of society. Healthy, strong marriages between a man and a woman help lay a solid foundation for the development of children. Many problems that plague the culture today can be traced to a breakdown in the family structure. MCC supported policies to aid families and their children and advocated for measures to protect families and children from harm and violence.

Support Provided to Catholic Agency-Influenced Reforms to Foster Care, Adoption

Catholic Charities and related agencies had a direct hand in advancing MCC-supported reforms to improve access to adoption and foster care in Michigan this past session.

The House appointed an Adoption and Foster Care Task Force that met with stakeholders to consider improvements to the child welfare system and the adoption process. The task force report with recommended legislation contained several ideas that were the direct result of information provided by Catholic agencies.

The task force recommendations were transformed into a series of bills, several of

which were supported by MCC.²⁵ After moving through the legislative process, much of the adoption and foster care reforms were signed into law.

One of those enacted bills that originated from the task force and supported by MCC provides a tax incentive to employers who allow their employees to go on paid leave after adopting a child.²⁶

Another proposal from the task force that became law requires the state to work with entities that perform family finding and engagement services so that foster youth can connect to their own family and friends.²⁷

25. The bills MCC supported were HBs 5801, 5975–5978, 5980–5981 and 6070.

26. HB 6070, sponsored by Rep. Jack O'Malley.

27. HB 5978, sponsored by Rep. Rodney Wakeman.

Other Highlights in Strengthening Marriages and Families

MCC also supported policies and legislation that:

- Increases protections against abuse of children through several measures, including requiring more professional occupations to be mandatory reporters of abuse,²⁸ requiring the state to develop age-appropriate informational materials for schools related to sexual abuse and sexual harassment,²⁹ and increase penalties for abuse of vulnerable children.³⁰
- Protects vulnerable adults from being exploited.³¹
- Maintained the current administrative rate for providers of foster care in the state budget.³²
- Increased adoption subsidies and provided a 20% increase to foster family maintenance payment rates in the state budget.³³

28. HB 4880, sponsored by Rep. Roger Hauck, was signed into law.

29. SBs 223–227 did not become law this session.

30. HBs 4071 and 4072, sponsored by Rep. Bronna Kahle and Rep. Julie Calley, respectively.

31. HBs 4472–4479 did not become law this session.

32. Spending provision included in both the FY 2022 and 2023 state budgets.

33. Spending provision included in the FY 2023 state budgets but was vetoed by the Governor.







Bishop John Doerfler of the Diocese of Marquette celebrates the opening of the Women's Recovery Home in Escanaba, opened in partnership with the Lutheran church as a place of healing and support for women suffering from addiction. Catholic Charities agencies are on the front lines in the state's fight in the opioid crisis, working with people who are suffering from drug addiction.

Photo courtesy Diocese of Marquette

Improving Access to Healthcare

Catholic teaching holds that access to adequate healthcare is a basic human right. Healthcare is necessary for ensuring a proper quality of life and is directly tied to upholding the dignity of all people. In addition to advocacy focused on expanding access to healthcare, MCC also lent attention to addressing broader public health issues.

Addressing the Opioid Abuse Crisis

In recent years, more policymakers are acknowledging the toll of the opioid abuse crisis in this state, as too many Michiganders are dying from medication-related deaths.

A national lawsuit brought against opioid companies resulted in millions of dollars in settlement funds for disbursement to every state—including Michigan—to be used to combat opioid abuse.

Michigan will receive about \$800 million in settlement funds, and the Legislature enacted

legislation to receive the funds and set up an advisory commission to make decisions on how to best direct funds to address substance abuse, bills that MCC supported.³⁴

Following establishment of the advisory commission, MCC was pleased with the appointment of the CEO of Catholic Social Services of the Upper Peninsula to the panel, ensuring a Catholic voice in making decisions on where best to direct funds for these efforts.

Promoting Dignity for Organ Donors

Measures to increase access to organ donations for those who are HIV-positive and protecting access to organ donations for people with disabilities both received support from MCC this session.

A bill signed into law allows HIV-positive individuals to receive organ donations from other HIV-positive individuals.³⁵ The legislation was intended to provide more opportunities for organ donations and to recognize the dignity of those who are HIV-positive. It also allows HIV-

positive donated organs to remain in Michigan rather than requiring the organs be transported for use elsewhere, as was the practice before this legislation.

The HIV organ donation bill received unanimous support from both the House and Senate and earned the Governor's signature to become law.

MCC also supported a separate bill that would ensure people with disabilities would not be denied an organ transplant based

34. SBs 993–995 were signed into law.

35. HB 4521, sponsored by Rep. Felicia Brabec.

solely on their disability.³⁶ That bill cleared the Legislature and was sent to the Governor's office for her signature.

MCC also took the following action to improve access to healthcare:

- Opposed legislation that could diminish the local mental health services provided by Catholic Charities agencies and other local health providers.³⁷

36. HB 4762, sponsored by Rep. Bronna Kahle.

37. SBs 597 and 598, sponsored by Sen. Mike Shirkey and Sen. John Bizon, respectively, did not become law.





RADICAL FORGIVENESS

3rd Annual West Michigan Restorative Justice Conference



The third annual Restorative Justice Conference was hosted by the Diocese of Grand Rapids, which served as a forerunner for the Michigan Restorative Justice Council, a group that includes MCC and other Catholics who have been working to get restorative justice practices legislation introduced and passed in the Legislature.

Photo courtesy Diocese of Grand Rapids

Pursuing Restorative Justice

Achieving restorative justice involves a balance between fairness and rehabilitation, both for those affected by crimes and those who commit them. The Catholic concept of restorative justice promotes policies that improves public safety, encourages accountability and healing, and contributes to rehabilitation. MCC worked to advance policies that achieve those outcomes this past session.

Police Reform Measures Supported by MCC

Reform of policing practices has been a topic of public discourse the past few years, typically in response to officer shootings that have resulted in the death of African Americans.

In the wake of high-profile events such as the death of George Floyd in 2020, Michigan lawmakers introduced a series of bills intended to reform police practices, with the goal of reducing instances of escalated encounters and introducing accountability measures when law enforcement officials are involved in shooting deaths.

The bills in the most recent version introduced this session would, among other measures, provide current and future officers with

training on implicit bias and de-escalation techniques, and revoke the license of a law enforcement officer who used excessive force if it resulted in the death or serious bodily harm of another person, and prohibit the license from being reissued.³⁸ MCC indicated its support of the concepts in the bills.

After another high-profile shooting where a Grand Rapids police officer was charged with murder following the death of a young Black man, MCC reiterated its support for the bills in a published *Word from Lansing* column and called for the Legislature to take up the discussion on law enforcement reform.

38. SBs 473–476, 478, and 480–484.

Time to Discuss Law Enforcement Reform Again After Tragic Death in Grand Rapids



Video of a man shot dead at point blank range in the back of the head by a police officer in Grand Rapids has reopened wounds felt by many African-Americans who have witnessed similar tragedies across our nation.

While the African-American community is particularly touched by the tragic death of Patrick Lyoya, all people should be concerned about the loss of life that has resulted from incidents like this.

In response to the death of Lyoya in early April, Bishop David Walkowiak, bishop of the Diocese of Grand Rapids, called for us as brothers and sisters, “to pray fervently, care for each other, and work peacefully for justice...we are called to do our part to share in His mission to build up...the kingdom of justice, love and peace, both here on earth and in our hearts.”

While the process to learn what happened to Lyoya is still unfolding, the fact is another African-American man is dead; his life cut short, and people are hurting and angry. That hurt and anger is being channeled into calls for change, including for how police conduct themselves.

On this day two years ago, another African-American man named George Floyd died in an encounter with police, leading to nationwide unrest and calls for change. On the one-year anniversary of Floyd’s death, members of the Michigan Legislature unveiled bills to reform law enforcement practices, with the intention of improving how police handle con-

Op-ed published May 25, 2022 in *Detroit Catholic* that called for discussion of law enforcement reform in the wake of a police-involved shooting death of an African-American man in Michigan.



cthl.cc/wtiwl

frontations like those that resulted in the death of Floyd—and now Lyoya.

The measures include providing current and future officers with training on implicit bias and de-escalation techniques. From the footage released of the incident that led to Lyoya's death, it is reasonable to ask if there could have been a way for the officer to de-escalate the conflict with Lyoya before eventually shooting him.

Among other proposals, the bills would revoke the license of a law enforcement officer who used excessive force if it resulted in the death or serious bodily harm of another person and prohibit the license from being reissued. They would also require guidelines for investigations into deaths caused by law enforcement and communicating those guidelines to law enforcement agencies.

Michigan Catholic Conference supported the bills, but the Legislature did not pass them. The newest package of bills introduced in May 2021 were subject to several constructive hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee but have not advanced from there.

In supporting reform proposals like these, we must recognize the essential role law enforcement officers play in providing safe communities and serving the public, often putting their lives on the line to do so. At the same time, we also acknowledge the challenges that members of the African-American community have faced and continue to face with respect to racism, injustice, and violence at the hands of a few police officers. While these incidents are relatively rare, they are troubling nonetheless.

These bills could improve how police approach difficult situations, protect their own safety, and ensure every person is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve as people made in the image and likeness of God.

With the tragic death of another young African-American man—this time in our own state—fresh in our hearts and minds, the Legislature must renew the discussion about these law enforcement reforms and examine what can be done to prevent situations like this from happening again.

Bishop Walkowiak, in his statement, asked everyone to work peacefully for justice, and we echo that, particularly in an election year.

The bishop also called for building up the kingdom of justice, love, and peace. That means affirming the dignity of all human lives and advocating for changes to address unjust societal structures, policies, and practices, especially those that disproportionately impact men and women of color.

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Other Highlights in Pursuing Restorative Justice

MCC also supported legislation and policies that:

- Eliminated incarceration as a penalty for several types of low-level misdemeanors to cut down on unnecessary incarceration and to ensure Michiganders are not forever criminalized for minor offenses. The bills also offer judges more discretion to determine the appropriate response to a crime.³⁹
- Allow prisoners to earn productivity credits through participation in educational and vocational programs that could be applied toward their sentence and move up his or her parole eligibility and discharge dates.⁴⁰
- Enable the use of a restorative justice mediation process as an option for crime victims, by providing a platform for the victim to describe the impact that the harm caused and enable the individual who caused harm the opportunity to agree on consequences to repair the harm, all conducted through joint or separate mediated sessions.⁴¹

39. HBs 4138 and 4141–4155, although just three of those bills—HBs 4149, 4151 and 4152—were signed into law.

40. HBs 4670–4673 did not become law this session.

41. MCC participated in a workgroup led by the Diocese of Grand Rapids that influenced the introduction of HB 5987, sponsored by Rep. David LaGrand, which did not become law this session.







The Hispanic/Migrant Affairs office of Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo hosts a meal for the migrant farmworkers of a camp in Berrien County. The office ministered to 295 migrant camps and more than 13,000 individuals who came to the nine counties of the diocese to work on farms in 2022 and is one example of how the Church reaches out to welcome the strangers among us.

Photo courtesy Diocese of Kalamazoo

Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees

Extending hospitality to immigrants and refugees has its roots in the Old Testament and has been a primary concern of Pope Francis's pontificate. Catholic social teaching calls us to uphold the basic human dignity of all foreigners, regardless of their immigration status, and to provide particular concern for the most vulnerable, especially children and families and those fleeing from persecution and war. MCC sought to embody this principle as a vocal advocate at the Capitol for immigrants and refugees and their needs.

MCC Continues Opposition to Legislation Unwelcoming to Immigrants

MCC stood opposed to legislation that sends the message that immigrants are not allowed in Michigan.

In recent sessions, legislation has been introduced to ban what's known as "sanctuary city" policies. These locally enacted policies typically prevent the local police department from soliciting the immigration status from individuals who seek police services, report crimes, or are witnesses. However, a person's immigration status can be asked for if it is relevant to the investigation of a criminal offense,

or when law enforcement is processing an arrested person.

Bills introduced in the Legislature would ban any local ordinances or policies that establish so-called sanctuary cities.⁴² While the bills did not become law this session, MCC voiced its concerns with the legislation, including whether it would dissuade immigrants and refugees from seeking police help when in danger, as well as the overarching concern that such legislation sends a message that our state is not welcoming.

42. HB 4197, sponsored by Rep. Pamela Hornberger; and HB 4539, sponsored by Rep. Beau LaFave.



Cause for Driver's Licenses, IDs for Immigrants Continues Forward

MCC joined with other advocates in pushing for legislation to provide state identification cards and driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants and legal immigrants awaiting their documentation.⁴³

MCC's long-time support of the policy is rooted in the belief that it upholds immigrants'

and refugees' dignity by allowing them to work and take care of their children. It also ensures people can legally and safely transport themselves and their children to the doctor, the grocery store, to school, and to visit family.

Other Highlights in Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees

MCC also took the following action:

- Provided support for and issued a press statement commending a House resolution that formally conveyed a welcome to Afghan refugees fleeing the country to Michigan. The resolution was offered in the wake of the withdrawal of American

troops from Afghanistan, which was accompanied by thousands of Afghans fleeing from the Taliban regime.⁴⁴ MCC also helped to secure radio interviews and discussions with staff of local Catholic Charities agencies.

43. HBs 4835 and 4836, sponsored by Rep. Padma Kuppa and Rep. Rachel Hood, respectively, did not become law this session.

44. HR 160, sponsored by Rep. Mari Manoogian.

News release published Oct. 5, 2021 in support of a House resolution that extended a welcome to Afghan refugees to the state of Michigan.



cthl.cc/dbmoa

Catholic Conference Welcomes House Resolution in Support of Welcoming Afghan Refugees to Michigan



(Lansing, Mich.)—The state of Michigan and its elected officials have a moral obligation to support the authorized admittance of refugees fleeing violence in Afghanistan, according to a Resolution that was discussed in the House Military, Veterans, and Homeland Security Committee today. Michigan Catholic Conference offered the following comments after this afternoon’s hearing in support of House Resolution 160, sponsored by Representative Mari Manoogian (D-Birmingham):

“Refugees, immigrants, and asylees, together with the current Afghan evacuees, flee their homeland in search of safety and religious freedom, values known worldwide to be present and at the very heart and soul of the United States of America,” said **David Maluchnik, Vice President for Communications**. “Whether refugees are fleeing violence and chaos in Afghanistan or in Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, or another country that seeks to terrorize and mitigate the freedom of its citizens, our great state and nation shine as a beacon of hope, security, and a cradle of compassion and respect for the dignity of all persons.

“Catholic Charities agencies in this state and across the country have risen to the challenge to receive Afghans, as welcoming the immigrant and upholding and amplifying their dignity as persons is a principle of the Catholic faith and Catholic social teaching. It is

common practice for Catholic Charities to be present at the airport, to welcome families and transport them to a furnished home. Thereafter the parents are offered English-language lessons, job training, assistance with paperwork, medical care, and schooling and clothing for their children. Michigan Catholic Conference is grateful to Representative Manoojian for sponsoring House Resolution 160.”

A Resolution is a testament to the position of the body through which it is offered and represents a statement of belief and support for a situation, cause, or person. Resolutions are not binding on the people of the state, meaning they do not have the force of law like a statute passed by one legislative chamber or another. The text of House Resolution 160 follows:

A resolution to welcome Afghan refugees to the state of Michigan.

Whereas, The unfolding tragedy in Afghanistan has created a humanitarian crisis. Tens of thousands of Afghans have already been evacuated from the country, and many more continue to flee the violence and repression of Taliban control; and

Whereas, Michigan’s elected leaders have a moral obligation to support the authorized admittance of Afghan refugees to our state. Thousands of Afghans put their lives on the line to support American servicemembers, including 70,000 Michiganders, in their fight against the Taliban. We must now honor our commitment to them; and

Whereas, Michigan’s elected leaders and various human services organizations have committed to providing the necessary support for Afghans who come to our state. This support will be critical in ensuring these refugees and our state are put in the best position to succeed; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we welcome Afghan refugees to the state of Michigan.

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WELCOME!!!





Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

Caring for Creation and Preserving Natural Resources

The world we live in and its resources are gifts from God that we are called to cultivate and care for. Exercising environmental stewardship—or failing to do so—not only impacts the natural world, but also the people with which we share our common home, particularly those who are vulnerable. MCC this session sought to support legislation that practices environmental stewardship through promotion of sustainable energy production, while also supporting legislation to protect access to resources like clean water.

Support for Sustainable Energy

Recognizing that sustainable energy production protects the environment and conserves natural resources, MCC supported legislation that looked to promote or incentivize continued investment in renewable energy sources in Michigan.

One such proposal would remove the limit on how much residentially produced solar power can enter the larger electric grid, which would further incentivize residential investment into solar power and promote energy affordability.⁴⁵

MCC also supported a pair of bills intended to encourage the creation of community solar projects, which allows multiple energy customers to join and share a local-based solar power source, much like how a community garden works.⁴⁶



45. HB 4236, sponsored by Rep. Gregory Markkanen, did not become law this session.

46. HBs 4715 and 4716, sponsored by Rep. Rachel Hood and Rep. Michele Hoytenga, respectively, did not become law this session.

Follow MCC's advocacy efforts in the Legislature

Sign up for the Catholic Advocacy Network to receive weekly updates and opportunities to share your Catholic perspective on public policy matters with lawmakers. To learn more, visit micatholic.org/can.

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