

LEGISLATIVE HOT LINE



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Sponsored by the Five Catholic Commissions and Catholic Campaign for Human Development of the Secretariat for Catholic Charities Health and Human Services

April 15, 2009

“Catholic Social Teaching tells us that everyone has “the right to live” as well as “the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest and, finally, the necessary social services” (Pope John XXIII Pacem in Terris #11)

STATE BUDGET HB 1 – ACT NOW TO PRIORITIZE THE NEEDS OF THE POOR & VULNERABLE

BACKGROUND: The state budget is currently being debated in both houses of the State Legislature. The state’s budget is a moral document that outlines our priorities in addressing the needs of all, especially those most vulnerable. This is our opportunity to make sure our voices are heard in protecting the poorest amongst us, who are hurt most by impending budget cuts. The Ohio House has moved their floor vote on the budget back one week to **April 29!** **There is still time to advocate on these important issues!**

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: “As Catholics we must come together with a common conviction that we can no longer tolerate the moral scandal of poverty in our land and so much hunger and deprivation in our world. As believers, we can debate how best to overcome these realities, but we must be united in our determination to do so. Our faith teaches us that poor people are not issues or problems but sisters and brothers in God’s one human family”
A Place at the Table USCCB 2002

ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR HUNGER PROGRAMS

- More than 1.8 million Ohioans were served through food pantries from October-December 2008.
- Of those clients served, more than 232,000 were seniors and nearly 705,000 were children
- Many are employed, but cannot make ends meet
- Ohio Association of Second Harvest Food Banks represents 12 foodbanks, which distribute food to nearly 3,000 member charities
- In 2008 OASHF distributed more than 97.9 million pounds of food and grocery items through the network

ACTION: Write, call or email your state legislators, especially your House representative, and urge them to support expanding funding in the State Budget by up to \$17M per year for the purchase and distribution of shelf-stable food and surplus agricultural commodities throughout Ohio foodbank networks.

ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR FAMILY SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Most county Jobs and Family Services Departments report twice the number of individuals coming through their doors each day than was experienced a year ago.

- HB 1 proposes \$100 million less in funding to support the food stamp, Medicaid and disability assistance programs
- HB 1 proposes \$31 million decrease in TANF funds to provide assistance to families in crisis
- HB 1 proposes complete elimination of funding for TANF title XX transfer, a loss of \$62 million annually. These dollars are used almost exclusively for Ohio’s child protection system
- More Ohioans are seeking services through County Job & Family Services agencies than any time in history
- In the past year, one third of the applicants at the local Job and Family Services are new to the system

ACTION: Write, call or email your state legislators, especially your House representative, and urge them to address the \$193 Million loss to County Job and Family Services Departments. Title XX Funds should be maximized and TANF Title XX Transfer funds maintained. These funds provide support for child protective services, adoption and kinship care programs, and help for the working poor.

SUPPORT ELDER CARE

- In Ohio, approximately 8% of persons 65 yrs and older are living below the poverty level
- Each month, according to Ohio Dept of Aging, 12,000 Ohioans will turn 60, resulting in a 33.2% growth in that age cohort from 2007-2020
- 16.5% of the 60-69 age group have one or more disabilities
- In 2008, an estimated 257,759 older Ohioans received services supported by the Older Americans Act, including home delivered meals, personal care, respite services, and adult day services etc.

ACTION: Write, call or e-mail your state legislators, especially your House representative, and urge them to support expansion of PASSPORT and Assisted Living Programs for Senior Citizens. Ask them to restore \$67,000 per year to the National Senior Services Corp program. Many of our Catholic Social Service agencies provide senior companion, senior volunteer and foster grandparent services through this funding.

SUPPORT PREGNANCY PREVENTION AND LIFE RESEARCH PROGRAMS

ACTION: Write, call or e-mail your state legislators, especially your House representative, and urge them to support the following:

- **Reapply to the federal government for funding for Abstinence-Only Programs under Title V of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act**
- **Oppose using state funds for any abortion related services**
- **Prioritize funding in the Ohio Biomedical Job Stimulus Program for adult stem cells and umbilical cord blood donation networks and research programs. We oppose the cloning and destruction of human embryos for stem cell research.**

STATE BUDGET HB 1: SUPPORT FAIR, AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: “We recognize and affirm the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death and the inherent dignity of every human being.....A just society is one that protects and promotes fundamental human rights and dignity, with special attention to meeting the basic needs of children and the vulnerable, including the need for safe and affordable healthcare.” *Budget testimony by USCCB, CCUSA, CHA March 2007*

FAIR AND FLEXIBLE FUNDING PROVISIONS FOR HOSPITALS AND NURSING HOMES

- HB 1 proposes that 1.27% in FY 2010 and 1.37% in FY 2011 of a hospital’s total operating costs be assessed as a dedicated and permanent revenue stream for certain Medicaid expenses. While this assessment will provide a modest 5% increase in Medicaid reimbursement, hospitals will not get all of their assessments returned. Net cost to all Ohio hospitals would be around \$411 Million in lost revenues.
- HB1 will mandate that every Medicaid hospital provide services to every managed care enrollee, regardless of whether the hospital has a contract with his or her plan.
- HB 1 proposes that the Medicaid nursing home franchise fee be increased from \$6.25 to \$11 per bed per day.
- Currently rates for nursing facilities (NFs) are determined by a formula based on individual factors for each facility such as size of the facility, type of patients typically served and location. HB 1 standardizes the rate for NFs by paying the same base rate to NFs across the state. Catholic nursing homes will receive approximately **\$14 less per patient per day**. Medicaid funding for care and services provided by nursing homes grew by only 1% per year, while the cost of goods and services grew approximately 19%. Charitable nursing homes will lose \$281 M under the new reimbursement rates.

Facilities such as St Augustine Health Campus who serve a higher percentage of Medicaid recipients – the most vulnerable – will be impacted the most. This proposed Medicaid cut does not support the level of care and quality standards provided by St Augustine, just one of the not for profit facilities in the state having received the highest average quality ratings.

ACTION: Write, call or e-mail your state legislators, especially your House representative, and urge them to support the following:

- Ensure that hospitals get back 100% of their franchise fee assessment to support charitable missions
- Eliminate the Medicaid managed care non-contracting hospital provision
- Exempt charitable nursing homes not receiving Medicaid from increases in the bed tax
- Support fair funding for nursing home services. Address the shortfall in Medicaid payments to charitable nursing homes and hospitals. **NO CUTS IN RATES.**
(a complete listing of local, state and federal representatives is attached. You can also go to www.staugustinemanor.org and click on Medicaid information.)

SIMPLIFY AND EXPAND HEALTH CARE ELIGIBILITY

- Following budget cutbacks in 2007, parents' Medicaid eligibility for coverage dropped from 100% of Federal Poverty Level to 90% - leaving 25,000 previously enrolled parents without coverage
- Parent coverage helps to insure that working parents will be healthier, enhancing their capacity to function effectively as parents
- Currently eligible Ohio parents must renew their coverage every six months, while children renew once/year
- Ohio can reduce likelihood of parents losing coverage by changing the renewal period to once/year
- Simplifying enrollment and renewal processes allows fast processing of applications, minimizes paperwork, includes safeguards that maintain program integrity, ensures benefits flow to those who are eligible
- States that have implemented simplification strategies have seen significant decreases in Medicaid administrative costs

ACTION: Write, call or e-mail your state legislators, especially your House representative, and urge them to support the following:

- Restore Parental Coverage for working parents to 100% of the Poverty level
- Implement simplification of the Medicaid enrollment process to coincide with food stamps with an annual renewal.

OHIO TENANT PROTECTION ACT (Sub H B 9)

BACKGROUND: Around 30% of all Ohio foreclosures involve rental properties. Innocent tenants are frequently surprised with a **three day notice of eviction**. This costs them an average of **\$2,500** in moving expenses and **lost security deposits, appliances and furniture**. Lots of people don't have that sort of money on-hand and are forced to turn to charities and government assistance, as well as facing temporary homelessness.

Sub H.B 9 is scheduled to come to a vote in the Ohio House on April 22nd. It provides for the following:

- Requires landlords to give current tenants a 60-day notice when their homes enter foreclosure.
- Converts existing rental agreements to month-to-month in case of foreclosure.
- Transfers the renters' security deposits from the previous owner to the purchaser.

ACTION: Contact your Ohio Representative and urge his/her support of Sub H.B. 9 – the Ohio Tenant Protection Act – which will provide some protection for renters caught in the middle of foreclosure proceedings.

“CONSCIENCE PROTECTION” IN HEALTHCARE

Background: Recently the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) invited public comment on a proposal to rescind a December 2008 federal regulation that implements and enforces three federal laws protecting the conscience rights of health care providers. Congress is likely to face a number of efforts to end or weaken

protection in the area of conscience and prohibitions on federal funding of abortion. Now is the time to lay the groundwork to shape this process to ensure that conscience protection is maintained.

Catholic Social Teaching: *Catholic teaching insists that health care is a fundamental human right, an essential protection for human life and dignity. The Church has long supported access to health care for all with a special concern for the poor. This support is rooted in our "commitment to the life and dignity of every human being from conception to natural death." (U.S. Bishops, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, #16). No Catholic or other person should be forced by law to participate in actions that violate this fundamental conviction. Current conscience protection must be maintained. It is wrong to compel people to participate in abortions or other morally unacceptable actions, and any provisions seeking to do so will doom needed health reform. To undermine effective federal conscience protection, to abandon the longstanding prohibition on federal funding for abortion or insist that abortion should be an integral part of much needed national health care reform would violate our consciences.*

ACTION: Although time has passed for public comment to the Department of Health and Human Services it is important to **Contact your Senators and Representatives** and **contact the White House** to urge that **any** health legislation being considered include strong "conscience protection" for individuals and institutions. Go to www.usccb.org/conscienceprotection/ for more information and resources on this important issue.

EVENTS AND RESOURCES

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR CATHOLIC CONFERENCE'S ADVOCACY DAY

PRIORITIZING THE NEEDS OF THE POOR WITHIN THE STATE BUDGET

Wednesday, April 29, 2009 2:30pm – 6:30pm

- 2:30pm Trinity Episcopal (across from State House)
 - 3:30pm Issue Meeting and Legislative Visits
 - 5:00pm Legislative Reception in State House Atrium
- \$25 person/\$10 Student

Contact your Congressional representatives by FAX letter, e-mail, or phone.
Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at: 202.224.3121; or call Members' local offices.
Full contact info can be found on Members of Congress's web sites, at: www.senate.gov and www.house.gov

Call the White House comment line at 202-456-1111 or send an e-mail to <http://www.whitehouse.gov/CONTACT/>

For contact information on your Ohio Legislators, go to: <http://www.ohiocathconf.org/L/legisbydiocese.htm>

For more information on the above, please call the Diocesan Social Action Office at 216-939-3851 or 888-620-5280. You can also visit our web page at www.catholic-action.org for more information. Thank you.