

2016 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA NYS Catholic Conference



SUPPORT COMPREHENSIVE CONSCIENCE PROTECTION FOR INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Summary

Current New York State Civil Rights law protects medical personnel who do not wish to be involved in abortion procedures. State regulations protect Catholic hospitals from being compelled to allow abortions in their facilities. But these policies are limited and do not provide adequate protection to individuals or institutions with religious and moral objections to activities/procedures/mandates such as euthanasia, embryo research, assisted reproduction and same-sex “marriage.”

Conference Position

Comprehensive religious liberty protections are urgently needed as religious organizations and individuals are increasingly coerced into accepting standards and participating in activities which violate their deeply held religious and moral beliefs. The Conference supports such protections.

Rationale

The Catholic Church teaches that “society and the state must not force a person to act against his conscience or prevent him from acting in conformity with it.” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, #42) Religious-affiliated providers must have the right to operate and provide services in accordance with their mission statements and fundamental ethical principles. (*Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care*, fifth edition)

Yet recent legislative actions and judicial decisions highlight the urgency of establishing comprehensive conscience protections for religious institutions and individuals in New York State. A state mandate for contraceptive insurance coverage, a same-sex “marriage” law, and a requirement that adoption agencies place children in same-sex coupled homes, are a few of the recent legal changes in our state, and legislative threats such as a late-term abortion expansion and the legalization of assisted suicide loom on the horizon, presenting a multitude of new threats to freedom of conscience.

Protections for individuals and organizations must be established to ensure there are no adverse employment, licensing or certification actions, no denial of government grants or contracts, and no disciplinary actions for professional misconduct.

Broad and comprehensive protections are urgently needed in New York State Executive Law to prohibit discrimination against individuals and organizations which refuse to perform acts contrary to their sincerely held religious or moral beliefs.