

# 2016 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA NYS Catholic Conference



## PROMOTE AND SUPPORT ADOPTION

### *Summary*

This proposal would increase state support for initiatives to promote adoption as a positive alternative to abortion. The legislation would include several elements:

- A public relations campaign to educate the public and clients of social service agencies regarding the availability and attractiveness of adoption as an alternative for an unplanned or crisis pregnancy, and to recruit more adoptive parents. A major component of this campaign would be an increased emphasis on promoting the adoption of special needs children.
- Financial support for adoptive parents and their children through tax relief, particularly for those who adopt children from the foster care system.
- Financial support for the Maternity and Early Childhood Foundation, and for private agencies that promote adoption.

### *Conference Position*

The Catholic Conference supports adoption to provide stable families for abused and neglected children and as a positive response to crisis pregnancies. The Conference urges the Legislature to take action to encourage adoptions.

### *Rationale*

In recent years, there has been an increasing consensus that adoption reform is a necessary component of a successful approach to the critical social issues of childhood poverty, child abuse and neglect, and out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Although many efforts have been made to reform the adoption process, it is nevertheless clear that changes in the law are still needed to make the system easier, faster, and more welcoming to potential adoptive parents.

***Public Education and Promotion***—Unfortunately, adoption does not have a positive image in our society, to a great extent due to misconceptions or misinformation. As a result, this positive choice is not pursued by many who would seem to be natural candidates: those who are experiencing a crisis pregnancy (who instead often resort to abortion), and those who are ardently seeking to have children (who instead often resort to expensive, difficult, and morally problematic assisted reproduction procedures). Given the proven ability of the state government in public education campaigns, it is ideally suited to promote adoption, to recruit adoptive parents, and to place a strong emphasis on encouraging the adoption of special needs children. This campaign can be pursued through the media, as well as through existing state and local programs that serve expectant mothers and potential adoptive parents.

***Support for Adoptive Parents***—The high costs involved in the adoption process, and the increased costs of a new family member, can be a deterrent to potential adoptive parents. To overcome this obstacle, financial support should be offered, for instance in the form of tax deductions or tax credits, for reasonable, non-recurring adoption expenses. Both houses of the State Legislature passed a bill to provide a tax deduction for expenses incurred with adopting a child from the foster care system by wide margins in both 2014 and 2015. Unfortunately, the bill was twice vetoed by Governor Andrew Cuomo. Greater efforts must be made to ensure this deduction is included in the next state budget.

***Support for the Private Sector***—Although state and local governments have a central role in the adoption process, there are many private initiatives that deserve encouragement and support. The Maternity and Early Childhood Foundation has been very effective in awarding grants to private agencies that provide pre- and post-natal services to needy mothers and their children, and that can promote adoption as a positive alternative. Its funding should be increased and stabilized as a regular expenditure in the state budget. Other private agencies, including Church-run agencies, have a long history of exemplary service in arranging for adoptions, and deserve enhanced state support.