

2016 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA NYS Catholic Conference



RESTRICT STATE FUNDING OF ABORTION

Summary

Legislative proposals in New York State historically do one of two things: either they a) amend the state's Social Services Law to delete most abortion and abortion-related services from those which can be funded under the medical assistance (Medicaid) program, or they b) amend the annual state budget to prohibit the use of Medicaid dollars within the state fiscal year budget from funding most abortions.

Exceptions are included in these proposals which allow funding for abortions in cases of reported rape, incest, or endangerment of the mother's life. This tracks the federal Hyde Amendment.

Conference Position

The Catholic Conference supports these proposals which restrict or prohibit the use of state taxpayers' dollars for the purpose of performing abortions. The Conference advocates that the expenditure of these monies instead be directed toward the goal of producing healthy birth outcomes and providing income security to decrease the perceived need for abortions.

Rationale

The U.S. Supreme Court has been clear in ruling that no state must fund abortion. In *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* (1989) the Court said, "Nothing in the Constitution requires states to enter or remain in the business of performing abortions."

New York is one of only four states (Hawaii, Maryland and Washington) which voluntarily compel taxpayers to pay for elective abortions. Another 13 states (Illinois, Alaska, Arizona, West Virginia, Oregon, New Mexico, Minnesota, California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Montana and Vermont) do so because they are required to by court order. The vast majority of states follow the lead of the federal government in funding only those abortions necessary to save the life of the mother, and those performed following reported cases of rape or incest (the federal Hyde Amendment). Citizens do not want their tax dollars subsidizing abortions. A January 2015 Marist poll found 68% of Americans opposed to the use of public funds for abortion, with 71% of millennials opposed.

Limiting abortion funding can only help to lessen the tragedy of abortion. The state should be offering poor pregnant women and their unborn children choices and alternatives to enable both of them to live. Those who advocate abortion suggest that it is cheaper to abort the children of the poor than to care for them after birth. Yet, as a caring society, we must provide the basic necessities to sustain life—adequate housing, nutrition, clothing, education, employment and child care. For poor women, abortion is an act of desperation, not an act of choice.