



MICHIGAN
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

A Blueprint for the COMMON GOOD

The Public Policy Platform of the Catholic Church in Michigan

What is the Blueprint for the Common Good?

The Blueprint for the Common Good consists of nine advocacy principles that guide Michigan Catholic Conference's public policy work at the state Capitol. The advocacy principles are informed by Catholic social teaching, the Catholic Church's application of Gospel values to the world's affairs.

These priorities are approved by MCC's Board of Directors, which consists of the seven diocesan bishops in Michigan and appointed Catholic lay and religious members. In turn, MCC public policy staff work with members and staff of both political parties in accordance with the Blueprint to promote sound public policy in the state Legislature.

The Catholic Church, and therefore MCC, does not affiliate with any political party, support or oppose political candidates, provide financial support for candidates, or engage in partisan activity. The Church's mission in participating in public policy advocacy is to protect human dignity and to promote the common good for all people, particularly the poor and most vulnerable of society.

MCC proposes the following advocacy principles and related policies informed by the Catholic faith as nonpartisan and non-ideological perspectives to societal issues. MCC welcomes the opportunity to work with all persons of goodwill to advance these measures.

What is Catholic Social Teaching?

Catholic social teaching refers to the Church's perspectives on building a just society, originating from Sacred Scripture and articulated through a tradition of Church documents. It is grounded in and founded upon the dignity of the human person, which proclaims that God created human beings out of love and in His image and likeness, thus endowing them with an innate and inherent dignity.

All other Catholic principles flow from and are founded upon human dignity. Other core concepts of Catholic social teaching include solidarity, which recognizes that as one human family, we have a responsibility to each other; as well as a preferential option for the poor, which calls for putting the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

Catholic social teaching has been categorized into seven broad themes, and more information on those themes can be found at cthl.cc/3tx3k.



Upholding the Dignity of Human Life

Each person possesses an inherent dignity simply because he or she exists and is willed, created, and loved by God.¹ This dignity prevails in and beyond every circumstance, state, or situation the person may ever encounter.² Catholic teaching—which informs MCC's advocacy principles—flows from upholding human dignity, which first begins with respecting and protecting each person's right to life. **To uphold and protect the dignity of every human person, MCC supports:**

- Recognizing and protecting the value of every person's life from conception to natural death.
- Defending the elderly, the ill, those with disabilities, and vulnerable populations by upholding Michigan's statutory ban on assisted suicide.
- Initiatives and pregnancy care programs that provide and expand alternatives to abortion, as well as assist pregnant and parenting women with prenatal, postpartum, and adoption services, including state support of pregnancy resource centers.
- Eliminating abortion and promoting the health and safety of women.
- Prohibiting or regulating policies that violate the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life, including embryonic stem cell research, human cloning, and surrogacy.
- Reducing violence in society, regulating access to guns, and increasing access to mental health and addiction treatment.
- Expanding and improving end-of-life care until a person's natural death.
- Supporting the authentic nature of the human person and recognizing the inherent biological differences between males and females, with particular attention to gender ideology.
- Addressing racial injustice and promoting racial harmony.
- Policies that address the potential benefits and threats posed by the utilization of Artificial Intelligence.

1. *Dignitas Infinita*, No. 7. 2. *Ibid*, No. 1.

Providing for the Poor and Vulnerable

All people must have access to basic human needs to ensure they can live in a dignified manner. Whether in public policymaking or state budget decisions, the Church urges particular concern for the poor, the vulnerable, and those who lack basic necessities. **To provide for the poor and vulnerable and ensure basic human needs are available for all, MCC supports:**

- Tax policies that support marriage, families, and low-income residents.
- The allocation of state budget resources to provide critical services for vulnerable persons, especially healthcare, food, and heating assistance.
- Energy policies and regulations which promote competition, support for low-income ratepayers, and foster environmental stewardship.
- The right to exercise religious conscience in the provision of publicly funded services.
- Regulatory legislation that will protect the faith-based mission of churches and institutions.
- Maintenance of the tax-exempt status for nonprofit organizations.
- Access to safe drinking water and fresh food for families and individuals.
- Affordable, accessible housing and transportation options for low- and moderate-income Michiganders.
- Fair and adequate working conditions for all employees.
- Policies that foster and promote employment opportunities.
- Protecting the residents of our state from policies that prey upon the vulnerable, such as predatory payday lending.

Protecting Religious Liberty and the Freedom to Serve

The First Amendment assures Americans the freedom to exercise their faith in the public square. For Catholics and other religious individuals and organizations, religious liberty protects the right to worship as much as the right to serve others—especially those in need—in harmony with the teachings of the faith. **To protect the freedom to serve inherent in the right to religious liberty, MCC supports:**

- Freedom for faith-based providers, institutions, and individuals to serve the public according to their religious tradition and without interference from the government.
- Opposition to government regulations and mandates that violate the long-standing religious practices of faith-based organizations and individuals.
- Policies that proactively promote religious freedom.





Supporting Students, Schools, and Parents

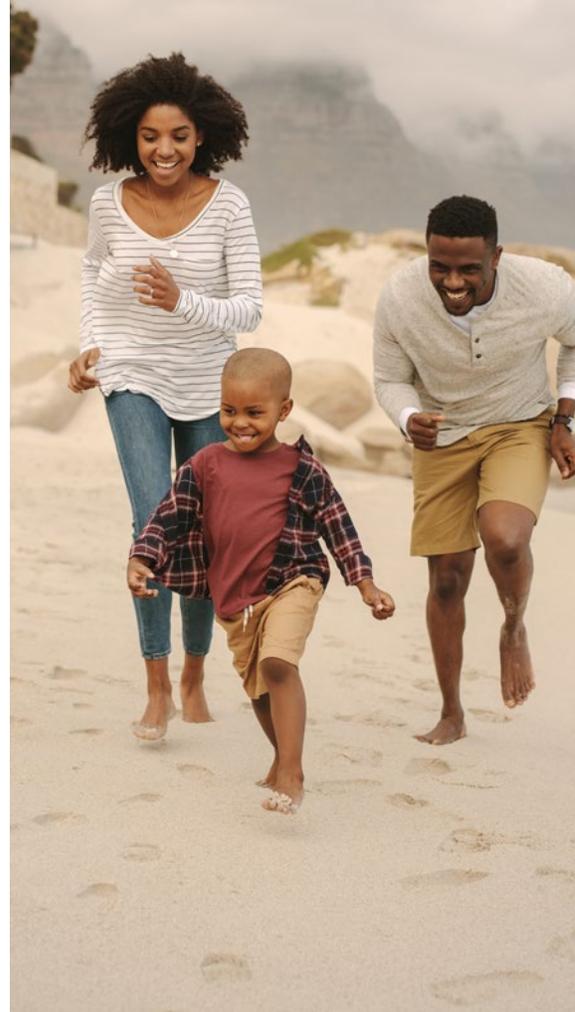
Parents have the fundamental right to choose an educational setting for their children that best meets their needs. As such, public authorities should promote education choice by removing barriers to public and nonpublic education so families can choose the best option for their children. **In its advocacy to support all students, schools, and parents, MCC supports:**

- Reimbursement to nonpublic schools for state-mandated, non-instructional services, including policies which protect the health, safety, and well-being of students.
- Maximizing opportunities for nonpublic school students to participate in comprehensive shared time services.
- Amending Article VIII, Section 2 of the Michigan Constitution, which prohibits any educational funding to nonpublic schools or their students, to allow the Michigan Legislature greater flexibility for necessary education reforms.
- Inclusion of nonpublic schools, students, faculty, and staff in state funded programs or initiatives, whenever appropriate.
- Improving the quality of public education and ensuring parental rights regarding the education of their children.
- State policies which enable Michigan residents to take full advantage of federal school choice programs.
- A requirement that all public school districts have open enrollment policies.
- Protection of nonpublic schools from excessive regulation.
- Continued participation of nonpublic schools in school safety and non-core extra-curricular grant opportunities.
- Adequate funding for the Michigan Tuition Grant and Tuition Incentive Programs.
- Policies and funding that foster and promote education and job training for the skilled trades, including information technology support positions, especially for students in low-income families.

Strengthening Marriages and Families

Family built upon marriage is the central institution of social life, and as such, the institution of marriage between one man and one woman and the raising of children should be encouraged and supported through economic and social policy. Attention and resources should also be directed toward situations where family structures have broken down and harmed children. **To strengthen marriage and family life and promote the wellbeing of children in all circumstances, MCC supports:**

- Promoting the traditional definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman.
- Protecting and promoting the stability of marriage and the institution of the family, including protecting parental rights.
- Strengthening the long-standing relationship between the State of Michigan and nonprofit agencies in the provision of child placement services.
- Combating human trafficking, domestic violence, and abuse of vulnerable persons.
- Supporting and promoting adoption and improving foster care.
- Policies that protect individuals from the negative impact caused by the use of social media, especially upon minors.



Improving Access to Healthcare

Affordable and accessible health care is a fundamental human right and should be extended to the poor, uninsured, unemployed, and other vulnerable populations. **To improve access to affordable and adequate health care for all, MCC supports:**

- Protection of health coverage, including preventative care, for low- and moderate-income individuals and families.
- Appropriate Medicaid funding to ensure adequate coverage for recipients and payments to providers in the public health-care system.
- Upholding the mission of faith-based institutions and the con-
- science of individual faith-based providers.
- Ensuring access and adequate resources for physical and behavioral health care, including telemedicine and treatment for addictions and substance abuse.
- Ensuring patients are treated with dignity and respect.





Pursuing Restorative Justice

To recognize the human dignity of both crime victim and offender, restorative justice fosters fairness and rehabilitation, improves public safety, and encourages accountability and healing. **To promote restorative justice for those affected by crime, MCC supports:**

- Policies that respect crime victims, including provision of just compensation and treatment for their physical and emotional injuries.
- Incentivizing intensive probation programming to reduce recidivism.
- Adequate state funding to ensure accused indigent persons receive competent legal representation.
- Comprehensive reentry services to assist the formerly incarcerated in becoming productive members of society, including job training for the skilled trades and information technology support positions.
- Sentencing guidelines and parole practices that reflect an individual's potential threat to society.
- Elimination of life without parole sentencing for juveniles convicted as adults.
- Mediation between victims and offenders during the sentencing process to assist healing for victims through the accountability of offenders.



Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees

As every human person is a child of God, immigrants and refugees must be treated with dignity, respect, and compassion—including in the development of public policy. At both the federal and state levels, the Catholic Church calls for measures that protect the family and improves access to basic services. **To provide welcome to immigrants and refugees, MCC supports:**

- Upholding the human dignity of all persons and working against injustices that compromise the dignity of immigrants.
- Promoting access to state identification and Michigan drivers' licenses.
- Policies that welcome refugees and asylees to the state who have been admitted by the federal government, as well as policies that provide financial assistance using public and nonprofit organizations to help serve those in need.
- Recognizing and promoting the value that immigrants, asylees, and refugees provide to Michigan's culture and economy.

Caring for Creation and Preserving Natural Resources

The Church promotes responsible stewardship of the environment and natural resources not only to honor God's gift of creation, but also because of the impact environmental deterioration has on people, families, and the poor. **To better care for creation and preserve the state's natural resources, MCC supports:**

- Improving access to safe and affordable drinking water and promoting responsible stewardship of natural resources.
- Protecting Michigan's lakes, natural resources, and public lands.
- Encouraging use of sustainable sources of energy.
- Promoting sustainable practices in food production, waste management, and transportation.
- Recognizing the disproportionate effect that climate change and pollution have on the poor and vulnerable and working to mitigate those disproportionate effects.



Meet the MCC Public Policy Team



Tom Hickson joined MCC as Vice President for Public Policy and Advocacy in 2011. He leads the MCC Public Policy team with an emphasis on church-state issues and tax policy. Prior to joining MCC, Hickson was director of legislative affairs for the Michigan Association of Counties. He has also served as legislative liaison for the state Department of Environmental Quality, assistant legislative liaison for the state Department of Natural Resources, and as a policy advisor in the Michigan House of Representatives. Hickson earned dual bachelor degrees in Economics and Management and Political Science from Albion College.



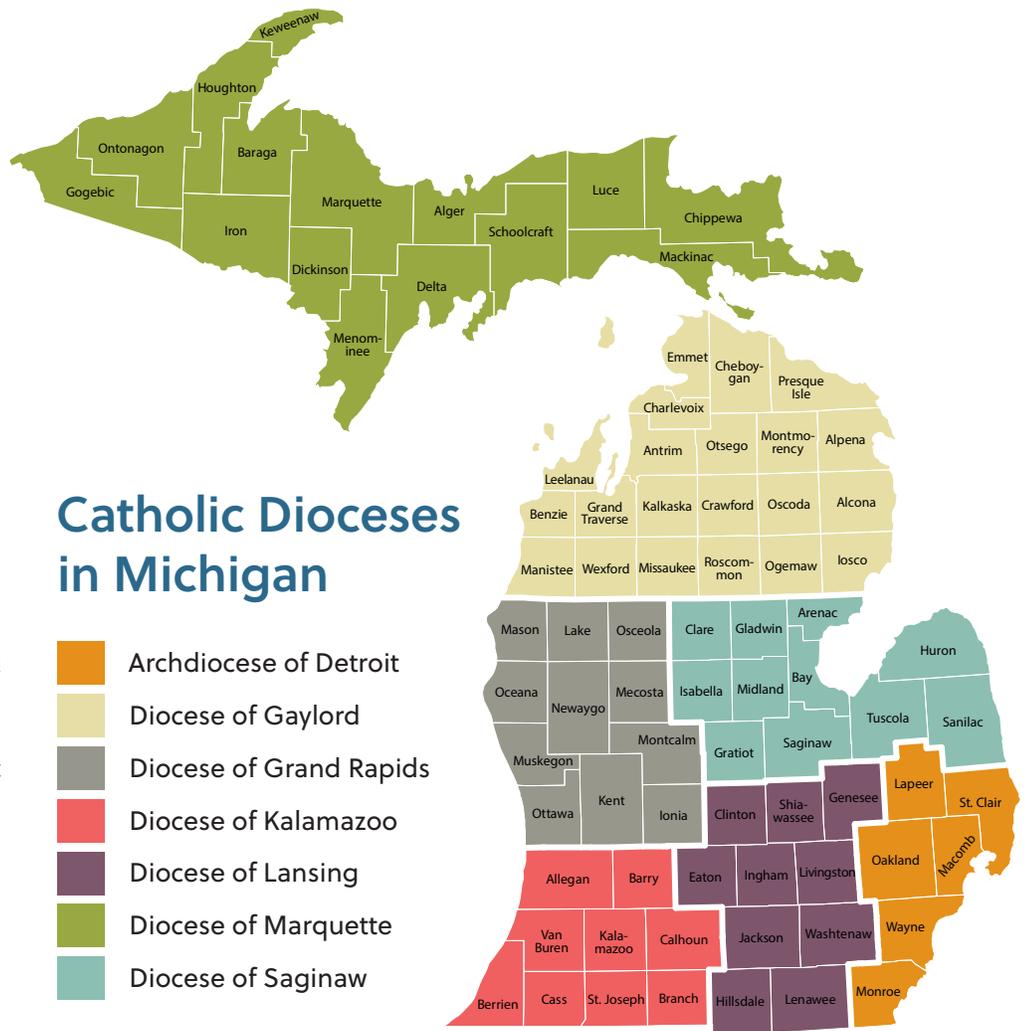
Rebecca Mastee, J.D. joined MCC as a Policy Advocate in 2012 and primarily handles advocacy on issues pertaining to human life, marriage, and health policy. Prior to joining MCC, Mastee served as associate director of the Montana Catholic Conference. Mastee has a background in secondary education and also worked as a corporate trainer in the pharmaceutical industry. She earned her bachelor's degree in physical science from Michigan State University and her law degree from Ave Maria School of Law, graduating cum laude.



Paul Stankewitz joined MCC as a Policy Advocate in 2004 and primarily handles advocacy on issues pertaining to education. He currently serves as chairman of the Advisory Committee for Catholic Education Policy at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Prior to joining MCC, Stankewitz served as city manager of Onaway from 1988-2001, and as director of the Michigan Catholic Rural Life Coalition from 2001 to 2004. He earned his bachelor's degree in urban policy from James Madison College at Michigan State University, as well as a master's degree in public administration from MSU.

What is the Michigan Catholic Conference?

MCC is the official voice of the Catholic Church in Michigan on public policy matters. Its mission is to promote a social order that respects human life and dignity and serves the common good. Founded in 1963, MCC is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of the seven diocesan bishops of Michigan, as well as seven appointed lay and religious members. For more information and to read about the history of MCC, visit micatholic.org.



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