

## WE MADE A DIFFERENCE IN 2014!

This past February, parishes across the Rochester diocese took part in Public Policy Weekend, gathering 9,679 signatures on petitions urging New York State officials to designate \$3 million for the Maternity and Early Childhood Foundation and to increase funding for Healthy Families NY by \$3.5 million in the 2014 – 2015 state budget. These two programs serve low income, young and vulnerable parents. In the final version of the state budget, Healthy Families' allocation was kept at the same level. and MECF received \$600,000. MECF's funding was in real danger of being eliminated entirely from the state budget, so we believe that our advocacy helped to keep this program going.

### DIOCESAN PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Bishop Salvatore Matano appoints the Public Policy Committee to assist him in determining diocesan public policy priorities and to develop an implementation plan.

**Chairperson:** Rev. Brian Cool Catholic Newman Community at U.R.

**Committee Members:** Jack Balinsky Diocesan Director, Catholic Charities  
Dick Bierl Blessed Trinity/St. Patrick, Tioga County  
Rev. Brian Carpenter Blessed Trinity/St. Patrick, Tioga County  
Ann Marie Deutsch Catholic Schools  
Marcus John Ebenhoe Cathedral Community  
Mark Keller St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Irondequoit  
Judith Kiehl Pax Christi  
Janet Korn, RSM Sisters of Mercy  
Doug Mandelaro Diocesan Communications Director  
Gerry Oftedahl Adult Stem Cell Initiative, Inc.  
Dcn. Tom Ruda Schuyler Catholic Community  
Lynette Saenz Diocesan Parish and Clergy Services  
Ellen Santora St. Paul, Webster  
Jessica Shanahan Pregnancy Care Program  
Mary M. Smith St. Boniface, Rochester  
Suzanne Stack Diocesan Life Issues Coordinator  
Phyllis Tierney, SSJ Sisters of St. Joseph  
Dcn. Nick Valvo Sacred Heart/St. Anne, Auburn

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ROMAN CATHOLIC  
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## 2015 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In our 2012 document, The Challenge of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, the U.S. Catholic Bishops remind us: "In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. As Catholics, we should be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to a political party or interest group."

This year the Diocesan Public Policy Committee has chosen challenging issues for our consideration. Supporting Women, Rejecting Abortion Expansion will be the focus of our diocesan-wide parish-based advocacy followed by efforts to support education through tax credit legislation in late winter. Educational efforts will focus on Global Climate Change and Child Poverty. All of these issues cut to the heart of Catholic respect for the life and dignity of all humans, especially the most vulnerable.

In New York State, nine important legislative protections for women and girls are being held up by the promotion of a tenth point that would expand existing abortion provisions, putting women at risk and further devaluing the lives of unborn children.

We will also advocate for tax credits that would encourage donations to public and parochial schools. Another educational focus will encourage reflection and action on the scandal of child poverty in our region. Urban, suburban and rural children all suffer the effects of poverty that stunts their development and deprives them of hope .

Pope Francis and Pope Benedict XVI have both spoken out on the urgent need to act now to protect our earth from human-caused climate change. Education is the first step in changing the way we use the earth's resources so that those who come after us may enjoy the earth as we have.

Please join us in these efforts to live out the virtue of faithful citizenship.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*+ Salvatore R. Matano*

The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano  
Bishop of Rochester



# EDUCATION PRIORITY

## GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

*Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: let us be “protectors” of creation ... protectors of one another and of the environment. — Pope Francis*

Human activity is altering the earth's climate.

Scientists point to indicators that global climate change is already underway — evidenced by melting glaciers and polar ice caps, violent and erratic weather and rising global temperatures. Warming seems to be occurring more rapidly than first projected.

Future consequences of global climate change include the disruption of agriculture, coastal flooding, drought, and the spread of tropical diseases. Our poor and vulnerable brothers and sisters will be most harshly impacted by these drastic changes. Concern for future generations calls us to act now.

The Diocese of Rochester Public Policy Committee (DPPC) invites Catholic parishes, schools, campuses, other institutions, and individuals to take the St. Francis Pledge to care for God's creation and the poor (see [www.catholicclimatecovenant.org](http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org)). Then, implement the pledge by

- learning more about the causes of global climate change
- reflecting on how the resources of our faith can help us respond to this urgent environmental justice issue
- acting to change our consumption habits and to advocate for policies that protect the earth and the poor and vulnerable.



## CHILD POVERTY

*In a world where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many hungry children, that there are so many children without an education, so many poor persons. — Pope Francis*

Did you know that in the nine counties that make up the Greater Rochester area children are twice as likely to be poor as senior citizens?

- 18.7 % of children are poor
- 12.4 % of adults are poor
- 7.8% of seniors are poor

Throughout the diocese, child poverty rates range from 14.4% in Ontario County to 26.1% in Yates County. In the most recent statistics available **children under the age of 6** were the poorest age group in New York State.

While no one should be poor, it is especially painful that so many of our children suffer the ravages of poverty.

Since 75% of brain growth occurs before a child reaches kindergarten, childhood poverty and the hunger and instability that often go along with it can impact people for their entire lives.

The Diocesan Public Policy Committee invites all of us as Catholics to learn about childhood poverty and what we can do to respond as people of faith to this scandal.

DIOCESAN-WIDE PARISH-BASED ADVOCACY

# PUBLIC POLICY WEEKEND

FEB. 7 & 8, 2015

## SUPPORTING WOMEN REJECTING ABORTION EXPANSION

The New York State Bishops Catholic Conference fully supports nine points of Governor Cuomo's proposed ten point Women's Equality Act, which would strengthen laws on human trafficking, pay equity for women, and domestic violence among other helpful provisions. We are urging lawmakers to enact the nine points of the Women's Equality Act that would truly benefit women. The tenth point would change New York's current law and allow abortions through the third trimester of pregnancy for essentially any reason.

**Allowing Non-Physicians to Perform Abortions**  
The tenth point would also eliminate New York's current requirement that only a “duly licensed physi-



cian” may perform an abortion. The Health Department would have unlimited and unreviewable authority to determine who could perform abortions in New York.

### Unnecessary Changes

Such changes are completely unnecessary. New York State remains the abortion capital of the nation with the highest abortion rate of any state. The reality is, sadly, that no woman is without ample opportunity for an abortion in this state.

We reject the tenth point of the Women's Equality Act that does not protect women or children and undermines the important and life-changing progress that could be made for women through enactment of the other nine points. New York can do better for women!

*Adapted from <http://www.nyscatholic.org/2013/01/re-the-abortion-expansion-bill/>*

## ONGOING ISSUES

### EDUCATION INVESTMENT TAX CREDIT

To address the dire needs of Catholic schools as well as public schools, the NYS Catholic Bishops join a broad coalition of faith groups, community organizations and labor unions backing the Education Investment Tax Credit. This measure would encourage increased charitable donations to generate more private scholarships as well as dedicated additional resources to public and private schools. It also provides tax credits to any public or private school teachers who purchase supplies for their classrooms. Of the \$4.6 billion in existing New York State tax credits, exactly zero goes to elementary and secondary education. **Materials on this issue will be provided for action on February 15 – March 31, 2015.**

The Public Policy Committee continues to follow and support other important justice issues including **war and non-violence, federal immigration reform, the New York State Farmworker Fair Labor Practices Act, and access to mental health care.**



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