



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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February 9, 2022

My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I am writing once again to encourage your participation in the annual public policy weekend that highlights our advocacy in support of particular legislative activity that will be of benefit to vulnerable persons who are served throughout our state. This year we are asking you to support two particular budget initiatives: first, the New York State Child Tax Credit and second, reimbursement rate reform for outpatient behavioral health services.

New York State has been a leader with the provision of the New York State Child Tax Credit. The Child Tax Credit is an effective tool to raise children out of poverty and 250,000 children have begun this journey. **However, it does not cover children under the age of four.** Won't you please join us as we petition our state legislators to close this loophole? This is a practical benefit for young life in circumstances of the greatest need; the impact will be multigenerational and express our concern for all human life from the moment of conception until natural death.

The second issue focuses on the drastic need for behavioral health outpatient rate reform. "Front Line Worker" is a new phrase with which we have become familiar during the pandemic. Within that group are those who provide necessary service and care to some of our most vulnerable neighbors and friends whose struggle with mental illness and addiction which has been compounded by isolation. Overdose deaths have increased by 38%, mental health concerns are identified by a similar number, but providers are unable to maintain the critical staff who can provide assistance. We are asking the Governor and the New York State legislature to invest in our behavioral health providers by including a long delayed COLA increase and investment in human service workforce development and support in the Executive Budget. We are hoping that this will permit service providers to continue this most vital service.

Life issues and protecting the dignity of every person remains the focus of our public policy agenda. There are many discreet issues that impact human dignity, the environment, and most especially the inviolable gift of life. We do not know when these will surface as legislative concerns. The most effective way to remain informed about them and to respond is through participation in the Catholic Action Network. You can express your beliefs and participate in their activity through nyscatholic.org. Your support in the past has been very effective and helpful.

I am grateful for all that you have been doing in support of your family members, neighbors and friends during this very difficult time. I pray you continue to care for one another in the many generous and kind ways that you have demonstrated. Please be an informed and active Catholic lending your voice in a prayerful and charitable way to our civic discourse.

With the assurance of my prayers, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Salvatore R. Matano*
The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano
Bishop of Rochester

Debtor in Possession