

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Michigan Catholic Conference Advocates for Moral Budget**  
*State Has an Obligation to Care for Those Most Vulnerable*

**LANSING** – By means of its FOCUS publication, the Michigan Catholic Conference is urging state lawmakers and the executive office this week to remember their obligations to the most vulnerable of our society while negotiating cuts to the 2003-2004 state budget.

“Certainly there is a direct correlation between moral government and the moral behavior and attitude of its citizens; therefore, a moral budget created by the state should foster broad implications upon the civility of its citizens,” said Paul A. Long, MCC Vice-President for Public Policy. “The Michigan Catholic Conference is urging Republicans and Democrats alike to remember those who require the state’s assistance, and adequately fund programs that address those needs.”

According to the FOCUS that will be mailed this week, two departments within state government, the Department of Community Health and the Family Independence Agency, are of immediate concern to the poor, sick and elderly of the state. Within those departments lie such vital programs as MICHild, TANF, State Disability Assistance, Children’s Protective Services, Foster Care and Medicaid. Those programs are vital to the care of our poorer citizens and should be considered “untouchable” when party leaders and the administration negotiate state budget cuts.

In an additional area of concern, an alarming \$500 million has been cut from Medicaid over the past five years while enrollment has increased to over 1.3 million patients in Michigan. An increasing number of citizens are enrolling in Medicaid, making it more imperative for the state to recognize the program’s need and to properly fund it at accommodating levels. While such a discrepancy in Medicaid must be addressed, it is also essential for the state to review the method in which it funds faith-based programs that are dedicated to ensuring the proper care of foster children.

The newsletter continues to explain that it is incumbent upon the state to fairly and proportionately fund departments and programs so that one does not receive an excessive, unnecessary amount in lieu of other deserving departments or programs.

The Michigan Catholic Conference is the public policy voice for the Catholic Church in this state.

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