



July 26, 2021

Contact: Dave Maluchnik
Vice President, Communications
dmaluchnik@micatholic.org
(517) 242-9623

Statement Regarding Fair and Equal Michigan Proposal and MCC Contribution to Ballot Question Committee

(Lansing, Mich.) – Today the Michigan Board of State Canvassers voted 4-0 to deny certification for a petition submitted to the Michigan Bureau of Elections by the group Fair and Equal Michigan due to an insufficient number of valid signatures. Working with the ballot question committee Citizens for Equality Fairness and Justice, Michigan Catholic Conference supported efforts to challenge the legality of Fair and Equal’s signatures. The following comments may be attributed to David Maluchnik, Michigan Catholic Conference Vice President for Communications:

“The Catholic faith teaches and compels believers to treat all persons with respect and dignity. Our collective and individual hearts can - indeed must - be opened further to allow for God’s love to overflow with kindness toward others, regardless of classification or place in life. How we treat one another as human persons cannot be confused with the responsibility to evaluate the full impact of public policy campaigns on the people of the state, especially the poor and vulnerable.

“The Fair and Equal Michigan proposal includes an unprecedented and likely unconstitutional provision to define religion only as a person’s individual beliefs and would restrict the ability for religious organizations to provide humanitarian aid and social services in the public square. The proposal would have a crushing impact on the poor of Michigan by harming many Catholic and Christian, Muslim, and Jewish organizations who daily and outwardly express their faith as a way of life out of love for their neighbor. The ‘sword rather than shield’ provisions of this proposal would be devastating to the poor of Michigan and make it nearly impossible to find common ground between constitutionally protected religious rights and statutory civil rights. This is about protecting First Amendment religious rights for all of Michigan’s citizens; it is neither a Democrat nor a Republican matter.

“Due to the Catholic Church’s teaching that males and females are made in the image and likeness of God and are biologically different from one another, the Fair and Equal proposal would likely label as ‘discriminatory’ or ‘hate speech’ religious teaching that differentiates between the two genders, exclude faith-based organizations from providing necessary medical and social services for Michigan’s neediest citizens, and create ongoing and burdensome legal challenges for any number of religious communities.

“Based on legal counsel and simple internet searches, we expect that if this proposal were to become law it would only be a matter of time before litigation and public relations campaigns were to begin against religiously-based charitable and humanitarian aid, including: women’s shelters; support for human trafficking victims; medical care for the poor and sick; child and youth camps, retreats, and mission trips; adoption and foster care programs; locker-room policies; support and outreach efforts to assist those harmed by domestic violence, people with mental health concerns, and persons suffering from addictions; as well as curriculum on human sexuality or biological differences taught at religious schools or affiliated organization, just to name a few.

“For these reasons, Michigan Catholic Conference has made a financial contribution to the ballot question committee Citizens for Equality Fairness and Justice to challenge the petition signatures submitted by Fair and Equal Michigan to the Bureau of Elections. It appears that the people of Michigan have wisely declined to provide sufficient signatures for this ballot proposal. Going forward, Michigan Catholic Conference will continue to work to protect the constitutional religious rights of every person in Michigan.”

Michigan Catholic Conference is the official public policy voice of the Catholic Church in this state.

###