



Maternity & Early Childhood

ISSUE

Support the Maternity and Early Childhood Foundation, Inc. (MECF)

BACKGROUND

The state Legislature has been providing funding since 1983 for the services and expenses of the Maternity and Early Childhood Foundation, Inc. (MECF). MECF, a private foundation, funds programs that provide critical services to young low-income pregnant and parenting women to promote proper prenatal care, optimal child health and positive parenting skills.

MECF funding has been renewed and increased in the years since its creation, from \$300,000 in 1983 to \$1.198 million in the 2009-10 fiscal year. Alarming, Gov. Paterson's proposed 2010-2011 Executive Budget eliminates all funding for MECF.

MESSAGE POINTS

- The principal objective of MECF is to improve and expand programs that provide pre- and post-natal care services to pregnant women and families through the advancement of funds to selected organizations across New York State. Agencies funded include peri-natal networks, cooperative extensions, community maternity services, residential programs, child abuse prevention programs and emergency assistance programs.
- No funds distributed through MECF are used in the counseling or provision of abortion. All distributed funds are used to improve maternal and child health and to assist the program's target population with their social, psychological, educational and other needs, both during pregnancy and after childbirth. Services provided include counseling, instruction in child care, prenatal care and parenting skills, home visits, support groups, referrals, and access to emergency services such as food, clothing, shelter, diapers, baby formula, etc.
- MECF has proved its cost effectiveness and accountability over its 25 years of existence, serving thousands of families and preventing serious subsequent health problems and future dependency on the public assistance and foster care systems.
- In 2009-2010 MECF funded 31 projects across the state, from Long Island to the North Country to Buffalo. Many more programs had applied for funding and had to be turned down due to limited funds. The elimination of all state funding for MECF would decimate many critical programs serving needy pregnant and parenting adolescents.

Church Teaching

"We promote a culture of life by supporting laws and programs that encourage childbirth and adoption over abortion and by addressing poverty, providing health care, and offering other assistance to pregnant women, children, and families."

—U.S. Catholic Bishops, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, 2007