



Support for Poor Families

ISSUE

Maintain supports to enable low-income families to live in dignity

BACKGROUND

The current economic situation finds a growing number of New Yorkers experiencing significant financial hardship. Our state has a legal, moral and ethical obligation to care for the poor and vulnerable. As Article XVII, Section 1 of the NYS Constitution states, “The aid, care, and support of the needy are public concerns and shall be provided by the state...” No one can deny that these are difficult economic times and the state budget has to respond to a decrease in revenues available. But it is also equally true that during such times the demand for services increase. The budget cannot be balanced on the backs of those least able to make further sacrifices. Supportive services for low-income families help to alleviate the severe financial strain they experience that undermines family stability and are necessary to allow for an existence that respects each individual's dignity as a person. Supports, such as childcare, healthcare, transportation, and education and training programs, make it possible for families to achieve or maintain a level of self-sufficiency.

MESSAGE POINTS

- Work is an important reinforcement of human dignity.
- Every New Yorker deserves safe and affordable housing as a basic human right.
- Supportive services in housing are needed in some instances to make living arrangements work.
- Working families need increased quality child care and subsidies to make it affordable and safe for their children. Families moving from welfare to work often lose health insurance benefits after a transition period.
- Sufficient transportation is not available in many parts of the state, making access to existing jobs difficult. This problem exists in both urban and rural areas.
- In order to escape dead end jobs, many low income wage earners require education and training programs to help them develop skills that are in demand.
- While the proposed increase in the public assistance grant will help to provide a more adequate level of support as individuals transition from welfare to work, we are concerned that its implementation is being spread out over four years instead of two.

Church Teaching

“The first line of attack against poverty must be to build and sustain a healthy economy that provides employment opportunities at just wages for all adults who are able to work.”

—USCCB, Economic Justice for All, 1986

“The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity.”

—St. John Chrysostom

“For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. A stranger and you welcomed me. Naked and you clothed me. Ill and you cared for me. In prison and you visited me. When did we see you Lord?” —Mt 25: 35-36