



2024 Public Policy Agenda

In faithfulness to our mission “to bring the healing, help, and hope of Jesus Christ to those in need with a compassionate, caring presence,” Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of St. Louis (CCSTL) advocates for public policies that assist our clients and those facing similar social, economic, and cultural challenges in pursuit of human flourishing. These policy priorities affirm a core value at CCSTL that states every person, including the poor and marginalized, is made in the image and likeness of God, possessing inherent human dignity. In 2024, we will focus our efforts on the following public policy areas:

Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance

Recovery from a disaster is a long-term project that requires resources and case management. CCSTL will stand in solidarity with those who are the victims of a natural or other major disaster, by advocating before federal, state, and local authorities to provide the funds, supplies, and support needed to allow them to recover and get their lives back on track. *“I express my closeness to the populations stricken in recent days by natural disasters. ... May the Lord receive the victims in his peace, console their relatives and support those who come to their aid.”* (Pope Francis, Sunday Angelus prayer, February 20, 2022, reflecting upon disasters in Madagascar and Brazil)

Providing Housing and Preventing Homelessness

The lack of affordable housing is one of the greatest challenges facing each of the 11 counties within the Archdiocese of St. Louis. Recognizing that housing is a basic human necessity, CCSTL will work to reduce homelessness by supporting programs such as the low-income housing tax credit program, advocating for more funding to address homelessness, and working to reverse legislation that makes homelessness a crime punishable by jail time. *“There is no social or moral justification, no justification whatsoever, for the lack of housing.”* (Pope Francis, address at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, District of Columbia, September 2015).

Care for Families and Children

CCSTL is committed to helping build strong and healthy families and children. We will work closely with state child welfare and foster care agencies, and advocate for policies, funding, and tax credits programs that support families in crisis and in need of services, along with those facing unplanned pregnancies and domestic violence. *“The family, the natural community in which human social nature is experienced, makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the good of society.”* (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, No. 213).

Senior Care and Residential Living

Our seniors deserve to spend the last years of their lives living in a manner that respects their dignity as fellow members of the community. CCSTL will advocate for policies that allow seniors to remain in their homes for as long as they are able, and to support them when they can no longer care for themselves. We will also support policies that provide seniors the healthcare they need as they age, while opposing efforts to legalize physician-assisted suicide. *“The throwaway culture says, ‘I use you as much as I need you. When I am not interested in you anymore, or you are in my way, I throw you out.’ It is especially the weakest who are treated this way — unborn children, the elderly, the needy, and the disadvantaged.”* (Pope Francis, Sunday Angelus address, January 29, 2023)

Multicultural Community Services

The Archdiocese of St. Louis is home to migrant communities that need and deserve our support. CCSTL will work with federal, state, and local authorities to support migrants and refugees, opposing legislation that seeks to punish this vulnerable population. We will also support efforts at the federal level to reform the immigration system in concert with the U.S. bishops. *“Immigrants are to be received as persons and helped, together with their families, to become a part of societal life.”* (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, No. 298)

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Good health is a combination of physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. CCSTL will advocate to sustain and increase funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment, and support efforts to increase access to mental healthcare services in underserved and rural areas of the Archdiocese. *“It is necessary to ‘fully overcome the stigma that mental illness is often tainted with.’”* (Pope Francis, address in Rome, June 25, 2021).

Workforce Development and Reducing Poverty

The poverty rates in certain urban and rural parts of the Archdiocese of St. Louis are well above the state average. We will advocate for policies that improve conditions for workers and oppose legislation that unnecessarily reduces public benefits or makes it harder for those in need to access them. We will also work with state and local authorities and other stakeholders to promote job readiness and training programs that increase access to employment for those seeking jobs. *“Human work not only proceeds from the person, but it is also essentially ordered to and has its final goal in the human person.”* (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, No. 272).

Community Education and Advocacy

For democracy to flourish, ordinary citizens need to understand our system of government and their important and unique role in sustaining it. CCSTL will educate fellow Catholics and people of good will on the basic tenets of democracy, and the role citizens play in making it work. We will also encourage people of faith to participate in democracy by making their voices heard before local, state, and federal authorities on issues of importance to CCSTL and the Archdiocese. *“We Christians cannot play the part of Pontius Pilate and wash our hands. We must participate in politics because politics is one of the highest forms of charity because it seeks the common good,”* (Pope Francis address to the Jesuit Schools of Italy and Albania, June 7, 2013).