



New York State Catholic Conference

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RICHARD E. BARNES
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Testimony
of the
New York State Catholic Conference
regarding the
2020 – 2021
Human Services Budget

Submitted by:
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Senator Krueger, Assembly Member Weinstein, distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly, Ladies and Gentlemen.

My name is Richard E. Barnes, and I am the executive director of the New York State Catholic Conference. The Catholic Conference advocates for issues of importance to the New York State Council of Catholic Charities Directors, the policy board for Catholic Charities and its programs operating in all 62 counties of this state. Catholic Charities' 400 human services agencies from every region of the state serve the poor and vulnerable, aged and infirm, immigrants and refugees, people with developmental and physical disabilities, people with mental illness, people with HIV/AIDS, those suffering from addiction, people and families who are homeless or facing housing insecurity, and many others. For more than 100 years, Catholic Charities has partnered with New York State in providing services, and it remains the largest non-governmental provider of human services in the state.

These are challenging times for the state, facing a \$6 billion budget deficit. Likewise, they are challenging times for Catholic Charities, which relies on a combination of government contracts, support from sponsoring Catholic dioceses, and donations from individuals, corporations and foundations to do the work that must be done to allow all of God's children to live lives of dignity and to access basic human needs. With serious financial constraints on Catholic dioceses coupled with federal tax reform that disincentivizes charitable giving, the state's investment in the human services programs provided by Catholic Charities becomes ever more critical.

It is for this reason that we stand with the Strong Nonprofits for a Better New York coalition in calling on the state to endorse the 3For5 campaign, which represents a 3 percent increase on contracts and rates for the next 5 years to ensure the survival of the not-for-profit human services sector.

Human services local aid has fallen by 5 percent annually since 2012. This trend is unsustainable and directly impacts the quality and quantity of services available in every community. The brunt of this disinvestment is borne by the 800,000 human services workers across our state, who have been forced to live with stagnant wages that keep the average worker and their families at or below the poverty line.

Consider these numbers:

- 60 percent of the human services workforce qualifies for some form of public assistance
- 10 years have passed since the state provided an across-the-board cost of living adjustment
- 80 percent of the state's human services workforce is female and 50 percent are people of color
- 39 percent of New York human services organizations have less than three months of cash on hand
- 68 percent of these organizations anticipate not being able to meet the demands for services by their communities

Every one of you have constituents served by Catholic Charities and other human services providers. I know you want to be sure that they have access to the services they need and deserve. The state's deep commitment to vulnerable populations is truly what will make New York the progressive leader in the country. But by neglecting the human services community at this time, the state risks turning its back on those who most need our help.

I know that each and every one of you do not want that to happen. Yes, hard decisions must be made in times of fiscal austerity. But we must not balance the budget on the backs of the poor and vulnerable.

Thank you for your service to this state and thank you for supporting the Human Services sector. Please do not pass a state budget that does not include the 3For5 investment.