

## Speaking out for Children and Workers

Join your voice with others from around our diocese

As the New York State legislature heads into a new session, our Diocesan Public Policy Committee invites parishioners to live out their faith by advocating for funding for programs that uphold human dignity.

For our Public Policy Weekend on February 12-13, parishes will be gathering signatures on petitions asking Governor Hochul and our legislators to support two initiatives:

**\*Expand the Empire State Child Credit** to include babies and children under 4 years of age

This tax credit provides monies to low and middle income families with children, but doesn't include the youngest children. We're asking for that to change, recognizing that struggling families with babies and toddlers need support, too. In fact the effects of financial instability are particularly adverse to the youngest among us. Stress and hunger can impair brain development, which is most rapid when children are very young, and can lead to lifelong deficits. Strengthening families' economic security helps not only the current generation of children, but the next, because poor children are much more likely to grow up to be poor adults.

**\*Increase Funding for Behavioral Health**

During the pandemic many people came to a new appreciation of "essential workers" whose front-line jobs serve the community and can't be done remotely. However, appreciation doesn't always translate into adequate remuneration for the work they do. The direct service staff who care for people with mental illness and addiction deserve better wages.

Moreover, the work they do is even greater demand because increased isolation from social distancing has exacerbated mental health challenges and substance abuse. More than 40% of New York residents report that COVID resulted in increased mental health issues. Overdose deaths have increased 38%. Amid this significant need, many service providers are finding it extremely difficult to provide these critical services at the current reimbursement rates provided by contracts with New York State. In fact, 97% of organizations providing these behavioral health services across the state report that it is difficult to recruit staff.

NYS needs to invest in our behavioral health providers and increase funding for mental health and substance use services. Therefore, we are also petitioning for a 5.4% COLA and a \$500 million investment in workforce, service, and support in the Executive Budget.



### Protecting Unborn Children

As the anniversary of the Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* approaches, please work to protect babies in utero:

1) **Pray** for the current Supreme Court as it deliberates the *Dobbs* case, which is deciding the constitutionality of pre-viability bans on abortion, and could even overturn *Roe v. Wade*! [www.prayfordobbs.com](http://www.prayfordobbs.com)

2) **Join** the March for Life in Washington DC on Jan. 21. There's a bus going from Webster the evening of Jan. 20: [www.liferoc.org/respectlife/march-for-life/](http://www.liferoc.org/respectlife/march-for-life/)

3) **Learn** about the recent FDA announcement that eliminates some of the safety requirements for chemical abortion. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops has created fact sheets on chemical abortion, safety protocols to protect the mother, and why the abortion lobby encourages in-home, mail order abortion. See: [www.usccb.org/chemical-abortion-fact-sheets](http://www.usccb.org/chemical-abortion-fact-sheets)

4) **Sign up** for alerts on life issues at our Diocesan Life Issues web site: [www.liferoc.org/respectlife/advocacy-education/](http://www.liferoc.org/respectlife/advocacy-education/)



## Catholic Conversations – Death with True Dignity

**Saturday January 15, 2022  
8:30am to 1pm**

The Finger Lakes Medical Guild, in cooperation with St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry, Mt. Carmel House, and the Diocese of Rochester, invites you to join a conversation on **Death with True Dignity**.

You are welcome to join in-person (COVID permitting) or virtually! Registration is available through St. Bernard's: <https://www.stbernards.edu/events/catholic-conversations>

The conference will address important topics and questions around common and challenging end of life issues, including...

- *Why does the Church teach that? (Foundations of Catholic Teaching)*
- *Does Hospice mean I'm giving up?*
- *I don't need a Health Care Proxy because my wife will make decisions if I can't.*
- *I don't want Hospice because they're going to kill me with morphine!*
- *But if I start the feeding tube, then the Church says I can never stop it...right?*



## Two executions scheduled for the same day... Advocate for clemency!

The state of Oklahoma plans to execute **Donald Anthony Grant** on Thursday, January 27, 2022 for the 2001 murders of Brenda McElyea and Suzette Smith in Del City, Oklahoma.

The state of Alabama plans to execute **Matthew Reeves** that same day for the 1996 murder of 38-year-old Willie Johnson in Selma, Alabama.

While acknowledging the suffering caused by these crimes, we still believe in the inviolable God-given human dignity and right to life of these men.

Donald Anthony Grant's story illustrates the cruelty of capital punishment. According to Catholic Mobilizing Network, he "suffers from mental health issues that stem from prenatal alcohol exposure, lack of oxygen from complications at birth, and a traumatic brain injury he suffered at the hands of his alcoholic and abusive father.

Mr. Grant's mental illness and brain damage was so severe that it took five years for him to be stabilized to the point where he could somewhat assist his attorneys in his defense. There was no assurance that Mr. Grant was even competent to be put on trial, but in 2005 he was tried, convicted, and sentenced to death."

Please sign the petitions to spare their lives:  
<https://catholicmobilizing.org/action/2022-01/stop-execution-donald-anthony-grant>

<https://catholicmobilizing.org/action/2022-01/stop-execution-matthew-reeves>

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