



## *89<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session Agenda*

***Life and Family Life:*** Human life is intrinsically valuable and should be protected by law from conception, which happens at fertilization, to natural death. Moreover, the natural family is the sanctuary of life in which parents teach children how they ought to live. The TCCB opposes direct threats to innocent human life, from conception to natural death, and seeks to promote strong, stable, and healthy families by:

- opposing euthanasia, in-vitro fertilization, and surrogacy;
- opposing efforts to weaken the protection of unborn human life;
- supporting education efforts for medical providers about the ability to treat mothers with pregnancy complications and regarding perinatal palliative care options;
- supporting funding to abortion alternatives and support for expectant mothers;
- supporting proposals that recognize the sacredness, fidelity, and permanency of marriage;
- supporting increased recruitment, formation, and support of foster, adoptive, and biological parents;
- opposing the advancement of gender ideology, especially in places where young people are affected; and
- supporting reasonable measures to address gun related homicides and suicides.

***Immigration:*** Catholics have a special concern for migrants based on the call in Sacred Scripture and Tradition to welcome the stranger in search of security and livelihood that they cannot find in their home countries. The TCCB supports humane border security to protect the vulnerable and just immigration solutions to protect all human life by:

- supporting enforcement measures which are targeted, proportional, and humane;
- supporting care for unaccompanied minors, juvenile migrants, and alternatives to family detention;
- opposing efforts to impede access to education and healthcare by migrants; and
- supporting the reunification of migrant families.

***Restorative Justice:*** The state has primary responsibility to uphold justice, with the goals of achieving restitution, protecting the common good, deterring offenses, and rehabilitating offenders. The TCCB supports criminal justice reform that responds to the needs of victims of crime, provides for compassionate treatment of prisoners, and encourages rehabilitation and forgiveness for those re-entering society by:

- opposing the imposition and use of the death penalty;
- supporting rehabilitation of offenders;
- supporting raising the age of criminal responsibility;
- supporting successful reentry of the incarcerated into society;

- improving the “junk science” statute to ensure its application when there is evidence of updates in scientific standards.
- maintaining religious liberty protections for criminal justice ministry;
- supporting reforms in the TDCJ sunset legislation related to the board of pardons and paroles;
- reducing procedural barriers into post-conviction relief in death penalty appeals; and
- supporting parole board review of lengthy sentences given to juveniles.

**Education:** As the primary and principal educators of their children, parents must be free to determine the best educational environment for their children. To ensure quality educational choices for all families, Texas should respect the independence and autonomy of private and religious schools while also fostering strong public school options. The TCCB supports increasing educational opportunities, especially for the poor and children with special needs, and recognizes the fundamental right of parents to direct their children’s education by:

- supporting parental choice legislation which includes accountability through accreditation, strong religious liberty and private school autonomy protections, and prioritization of the poor and vulnerable;
- supporting the elimination of the STAAR test for public school students;
- supporting opt-in policies for human sexuality instruction;
- supporting continued improvements to student safety and protection;
- supporting funding for tuition equalization grants;
- supporting the protection of the autonomy of private education institutions; and
- supporting access to before- or after-school childcare.

**Healthcare:** Healthcare is an essential component of protecting the sanctity of life and promoting human dignity. The Church teaches that we must especially care for vulnerable members of society, including the unborn, the poor, persons with disabilities and mental health issues, children, and the elderly. The TCCB supports equitable access to healthcare that is oriented toward the dignity of the whole person, made in the image and likeness of God by:

- supporting healthcare which respects patient dignity and physician conscience;
- supporting access to palliative care;
- supporting increased access to health insurance and healthcare, such as Medicaid and CHIP;
- supporting efforts to improve the health of Texas mothers;
- supporting increased access to mental health services, including prevention and treatment for addiction and suicide.

**Social Concerns:** The Church provides for the poor and the vulnerable in our charitable ministries. Justice demands that we also prioritize the poor and vulnerable when addressing

social and economic needs through public policy, including by adequately funding essential public services. The TCCB seeks to assist those who are in the greatest need by:

- opposing usurious loans, especially payday and auto-title lending;
- supporting efforts to ensure access to responsible lending products for consumers;
- supporting anti-poverty public assistance which incentivizes self-sufficiency;
- supporting efforts to assist in the care and support of persons with disabilities;
- supporting efforts to alleviate food insecurity and hunger;
- supporting efforts to increase access to affordable housing and childcare; and
- supporting efforts to combat human trafficking, care for victims, and reunify families.

***Religious Liberty:*** The Church feeds the hungry, accompanies the lonely, comforts the sick and dying, helps the addicted, gives aid to widows and orphans, shelters refugees, and ministers to the incarcerated. Yet today, religious liberty is under attack. Such liberty is not only about our ability to worship. Rather, it is about whether people of faith can make our contribution to the common good of all. Regrettably, the increased secularization of society poses threats to people of faith and faith-based organizations. The TCCB seeks to protect religious liberty by:

- supporting conscience protection for individuals and organizations contracting with governments, especially healthcare providers, educators, and those who serve the poor and vulnerable;
- maintaining religious liberty protections for criminal justice ministry; and
- supporting the rights of individuals to practice their faith within their chosen professions

***Creation:*** God entrusted the earth to the stewardship of humanity to care for her resources for the benefit of all. We are called to receive creation as a gift, recognize the interrelatedness between the good of the human person and of the environment, and to be prudent stewards of our common home, so that generations to come may also enjoy its bounty by:

- supporting efficiency and conservation in water use to maintain availability for irrigation and drinking;
- supporting transparency and community engagement in environmental planning and regulation;
- supporting permitting reform for concrete plants and crushers to mitigate pollution;
- supporting efficiency in disaster recovery coordination among non-profits; and
- supporting efficiency and conservation in energy use and efforts to mitigate pollution.