

**The Catholic Campaign for Human Development:
A Commitment to Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

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Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan

I have become aware that there are a number of news outlets on internet video sites raising concerns about Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and I want to address these. CCHD is the anti-poverty effort of the USCCB. CCHD's mission is to address the root causes of poverty in America through promotion and support of community-controlled self-help organizations. CCHD also provides educational opportunities for Catholics to learn about poverty, to interact and build solidarity with those affected by it, and reflect on a faith response to poverty. The idea is to help the poor help themselves, which is as important as our charitable works for the poor. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is the National organization of the Bishops and is required by Church law and Rome.

The organizations do this by giving poor people a chance to improve their lives and neighborhoods by advocating for more just policies (like affordable housing, preserving the acequia way of life in New Mexico, comprehensive immigration reform, getting basic services like water/sewer services, access to jobs and just wages), or by starting small businesses and creating jobs that would provide some stable income. Groups funded by CCHD have done great work in our Archdiocese to address the needs of the poor.

Last year, two national organizations funded by CCHD were found to be involved in work that was contrary to Catholic teaching, and after investigating, CCHD national staff cancelled those grants. None of these were within our Archdiocese. When CCHD is made aware of these kinds of accusations, they were investigated and if the allegations are found to be true, the organization is de-funded immediately. One case like this is too many, so we are very thorough in the screening process and take that responsibility very seriously.

I reiterate: CCHD does not fund organizations that promote issues contrary to Church teaching. While some of the criticisms raise valid concerns about tightening the CCHD process, many allegations are simply incorrect and untrue. I remind everyone that we cannot believe everything we read or hear, and all the facts need to be considered. Negativity and attacks divide our Catholic community and do not serve to build the Church, even as we strive to do our work better.

Within our diocese, I review all CCHD grant applications and approve proposals only after a careful screening. CCHD grant money comes from the annual collection taken each November and grants are given only to projects with objectives and actions that are fully in accord with the moral teachings of the Catholic Church. No ACA funds go to CCHD. Partisan activity is strictly prohibited. In addition, organizations that accept CCHD funds sign a contract agreeing that they will not engage in any activities that are contrary to Catholic moral teaching. In its history, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development has done much good. We would like to see such programs continue so that we can help people help themselves. I am, however, asking the CCHD leadership to adjust their funding requirements to allow Catholic groups such as our immigrant program at Catholic Charities to be funded. It breaks the cycle of poverty if immigrants get help to get papers, a job and language help.

In response to concerns raised about CCHD, the CCHD Committee of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has committed to:

- Rooting: continuing to root CCHD in the Gospel and in Catholic Social Teaching, which transcends political ideologies;
- Reviewing: reviewing their systems to assure that all funds are used in accord with the moral and social teachings of the Church;
- Renewing: making changes and renewing those systems as necessary;
- Recommitting: asking the Bishops in their November meeting to recommit to their mission of helping people help themselves

I remain firmly committed to CCHD's vision, and support the collection and grant process, along with other charity and justice efforts like St. Vincent de Paul and Catholic Charities. I ask you to do the same. Our commitment to Charity and Justice is a central part of our Catholic faith and is articulated in our Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan:

Compelled by the love of Christ, the Church expresses its respect for the dignity of every human person and strives to help each person achieve his/her full status as someone created in the image and likeness of God. In the spirit of the Gospel and Catholic Social teaching, the Catholic faithful express God-given dignity at a social level in collective and individual works of conversion, justice and peace.