



## FAIR AND EQUAL MICHIGAN STATEWIDE PETITION

### What is the Fair and Equal Michigan proposal and what does it do?

A group called Fair and Equal Michigan is seeking to amend the state's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act (ELCRA) through a statewide petition drive. The ELCRA protects Michiganders from discrimination in housing, employment, education, and public accommodations based on one's religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight, and familial or marital status. The petition would redefine "sex" to include "sexual orientation and gender identity or expression."

### What does the Church teach about how all people should be treated?

The Catholic Church recognizes all people—male and female—are made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, all should be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of orientation or identity. *The petition, however, has consequences that go beyond how people treat one another.*

### What types of challenges does this petition create for the Church?

Redefining "sex" in state law—and ignoring the reality of the biological differences between men and women—will likely create *significant moral, ethical, and legal challenges* for the Catholic Church. More specifically, it could force:

- Churches and affiliated ministries to hire people who do not share in their religious beliefs,
- Religious schools to change their curriculum, and
- Faith-based charitable agencies either to discontinue services—such as adoption and youth homes to the poor and vulnerable—or risk a lawsuit.

### Why is the definition of religion in this proposal problematic?

The petition would define religion as "the religious beliefs of an individual," which actually reduces the current understanding of the term under the law. While other state and federal laws also protect faith-based actions or speech in addition to religious beliefs, this definition does not.

### What ministries and activities of the Church would be negatively impacted by the petition?

- Homeless youth shelters
- Independent living homes for youth aging out foster care
- Caseworker and teacher hiring
- Mental health counseling
- Foster care and adoption placements
- State contracts for service programs
- Guidelines for usage of school locker rooms and bathrooms
- Administration of athletic programs
- Shared time instruction
- School curriculum

It is clear the petition *does not protect* religious institutions or faithful Catholics who continue to act in accordance with their deeply held beliefs, including in service to their community.



For the abovementioned reasons, the Catholic bishops of Michigan **DO NOT SUPPORT** the initiative from Fair and Equal Michigan and urge parishioners not to sign the petition.