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## 2019-2020 Legislative Agenda

New Yorkers for Constitutional Freedoms (NYCF), New York's statewide Christian advocacy organization, works to protect human life, promote strong families, preserve religious liberty, and proclaim justice and mercy. NYCF's agenda for the 2019-2020 Legislative Session focuses on legislation that will advance each of these four important objectives.

### Protecting Human Life

The signers of the Declaration of Independence bravely pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to the proposition that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Similarly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "[all] human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," and that "[everyone] has the right to life, liberty and security of person." NYCF supports laws and public policies that protect innocent human life from conception to natural death.

In regard to the protection of human life, NYCF supports the following measures:

- A Butler Amendment to the New York State Budget, which would prevent tax dollars from being used to fund elective abortions;
- The Unborn Victims of Violence Act;
- A ban on the discriminatory practice of sex-selective abortion;
- Legislation mandating parental notification before an abortion is performed on a minor; and
- The removal of taxpayer funding from Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers.

NYCF opposes the following measures:

- Any form of abortion expansion legislation, including the Reproductive Health Act;
- The misleadingly-named Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act, which would require group insurance policies to cover abortion-causing drugs, voluntary sterilization procedures, and all other FDA-approved contraceptive devices without restrictions, copays, or cost sharing;
- The Medical Aid in Dying Act, which would legalize physician-assisted suicide;
- Legislation mandating insurance coverage for *in vitro* fertilization; and
- Any Equal Rights Amendment to the state constitution that would establish a fundamental right to abortion.

## Promoting Strong Families

NYCF's family agenda is based upon the belief each child should—whenever wise and possible—be raised in an intact family unit by his or her own mother and father. On average, children who grow up in intact families are likely to be healthier, better educated, more affluent, and less involved in substance abuse or criminality than children who do not. In light of the marriage crisis in our society, as well the impact that crisis has had upon children's health and well-being, NYCF advocates legislative and non-legislative efforts to promote marriage. Because children whose parents are not able to raise them also need loving homes, NYCF strongly supports measures to increase adoption—particularly adoption by married couples. In addition, NYCF opposes government infringement upon parental rights. Therefore, NYCF supports the following:

- Making tax credits or deductions available to parents who adopt special-needs children and/or who adopt children through the foster care system;
- A bill setting forth a statewide strategic plan to place all adoption-eligible foster children in adoptive homes;
- A bill requiring mothers to be notified of their rights concerning the burial of miscarried babies;
- Extension of the birth certificate registration deadline to 15 days;
- Increasing the Empire State Child Credit, making the amount of the credit equal to the amount of the federal child tax credit; and
- The elimination of existing laws that limit a person's eligibility for entitlements if that person gets married.

NYCF opposes:

- The legalization of marijuana for recreational use;
- The legalization of smoked marijuana for medical use;
- The Child-Parent Security Act, or any other legislation that would allow surrogate parenting contracts;
- Providing STD treatment to minors without parental consent;
- The proposed Healthy Teens Act, which would provide a funding stream for Planned Parenthood to engage in sex education in schools; and
- The legalization and state licensure of online poker games, sports gambling, and/or additional gambling casinos.

## Preserving Religious Liberty

Religious liberty has been appropriately described as Americans' "first freedom." It is no coincidence that the Framers of the Constitution chose to place the Free Exercise Clause and its guarantee of religious liberty into the First Amendment. NYCF supports individual New Yorkers' rights to practice their faith, to speak about their faith, and to live out their faith without undue government intrusion. NYCF also advocates for laws that allow churches to operate without government interference. Furthermore, NYCF opposes any efforts to tax churches and other faith-based organizations. Accordingly, NYCF supports:

- Legislation allowing nonprofit adoption and foster care organizations to place children only in families with a married mother and father;
- The removal of unnecessary required approvals in certain church real estate transactions; and
- Legislation protecting individuals, nonprofit organizations, and small businesses that conscientiously object to participation in same-sex ceremonies from being held liable for discrimination.

NYCF opposes:

- The proposed Counselor Coercion Bill, which would ban licensed mental health practitioners from providing change therapy for minors with unwanted same-sex attraction;
- The proposed Boss Bill, which would prevent employers—including faith-based charities—from considering an employee’s reproductive health decisions in making employment decisions; and
- Legislation that would require compelled speech by pro-life pregnancy centers.

## **Proclaiming Justice and Mercy**

NYCF believes in the core American values of freedom and equality of opportunity. Our Christian faith requires us “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” (Micah 6:8b). NYCF supports measures that protect the rights and freedoms of law-abiding New Yorkers, including educational choice measures. We also support laws that protect vulnerable New Yorkers and help lift New Yorkers out of poverty.

NYCF supports:

- The provision of tax credits for grocery stores that donate food to food banks;
- Legislation banning colleges and universities from requiring homeschooled high school graduates to obtain General Education Development (GED) exams in order to (a) be admitted to college, or (b) graduate from college;
- A law requiring that homeschooled students be allowed to participate in interscholastic sports in the school districts where they reside; and
- Legislation making 529 plan funds available for elementary and secondary school tuition.

NYCF opposes:

- The Gender Expression Nondiscrimination Act (GENDA) (also known as the Bathroom Bill), along with any other bill that would provide special legal protections based on gender identity or expression; and
- The proposed New York Health Act, or any other legislation providing for a government takeover of health insurance (also known as a single-payer system).