



Legislative Education Group

Over 33 years of advocacy for Marylanders in need!

December 2009

Dear L.E.G. Member:

Welcome Back! Your participation in the struggle to assist the disadvantaged and vulnerable is critically important at this time when resources are tightly stretched.

Fighting Poverty with Faith is an initiative of over 30 national faith-based groups, including Catholic Charities USA, the network of Catholic Charities agencies across the country. Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Baltimore is engaged in this effort. And a fight it is in the current economy! We are excited to announce three new initiatives in our effort to fight poverty during these very difficult times:

1. **An Interfaith Prayer Vigil** – “Fighting Poverty with Faith” on Tuesday, December 15, 2009 at 11:30 am at the State House, Lawyer’s Mall, Annapolis. *You are all invited and encouraged to participate.*
2. **Catholic Charities’ media campaign** featuring Tiffany, a former client at My Sister’s Place Lodge, and Rickey, a graduate of Christopher Place Employment Academy. Both clients were helped significantly and are now self-sufficient because of Catholic Charities programs.
3. **A new Web-Based Advocacy system** – an efficient and effective way to advocate using a web-based system. Starting with our first alert, you will receive alert emails which will take you directly to our website and there you will be able to customize an email and send it directly to your legislators.

As we prepare for the 2010 session of the General Assembly, we invite you to reconnect with your elected officials and to think of ways to invite others to join our important work of advocacy. You will receive up to five legislative alerts during the 90-day legislative session and additional alerts throughout the remainder of the year, including at least one on the federal level. The alert will provide facts about the pending issue, recommend a position, suggest an action and include a sample letter with the opportunity to modify the body to add your own voice. Your timely response is critical because votes occur quickly and it is important that each citizen is heard. ***Your voice through L.E.G. benefits all those we serve – and thousands of other Marylanders.***

During the 2010 legislative session we anticipate advocating to support:

- Vital services to vulnerable Marylanders. The state budget will be a major focus of our work as we speak up to ensure that expected cuts do not disproportionately affect our most vulnerable neighbors. *(Yes, that is the same as last year when our advocacy did make a difference!)*

- Sustainable employment those living in poverty, including ex-offenders.
- Increased access to public assistance for low-income Marylanders.
- Initiatives to help Marylanders pay their utility bills.
- Initiatives that provide affordable housing.
- Services based on the needs of children, not solely on limited resources.
- Programs/initiatives that allow older Marylanders to age in their community.

Fact sheets that describe a bit about the people we serve can be found at <http://www.catholiccharities-md.org/advocacy/leg/>. These include updated Maryland statistics about people who are vulnerable, fragile children and families, and the at-risk aging population. You will also see a sheet that highlights the work of Catholic Charities.

Thank you for your on-going commitment to work for the common good of all our people. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Gratefully,



Sr. Joan Marie Stief, OSB
L.E.G. Coordinator
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And, we extend two invitations:

- Tuesday – **December 15, 2009**, 11:30 - 12:30 Interfaith Prayer Vigil, the State House, Lawyer's Mall, Annapolis. Email or call me if you are able to join us!
- Saturday – **February 6, 2010**, 9:30 - 11:30 Issue Briefing, Maryland Legislative Session. More information will be coming.

The Church cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper.

Benedict XVI: God Is Love/Deus Caritas Est