

# CATHOLIC RIGHTS AND ANTI-AIDS PROGRAMS

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights is gravely concerned about the nature of recent government anti-AIDS programs.

In a statement released today, Dr. William A. Donohue, president of the Catholic League, presented the organization's position:

"The central problem with many recent government anti-AIDS programs is that they undermine the right of Catholic parents to socialize their children according to the teachings of their Church and according to the precepts of their convictions. Catholic parents who are faithful to Church teachings, as well as non-Catholics who happen to agree with the conclusions of Catholic doctrine, have every right to decide what, when and how their children learn about sexuality. Tragically, there is evidence that at every level of government, parental rights are being eviscerated by public policy makers.

"For example, we now have the spectacle of the federal government sponsoring the sale of condoms—complete with explicit appeals to moral neutrality—in radio and television spots across the nation. It will not do to say that the ads, some of which are downright vulgar and sensationalistic, are designed to appeal to the 18-25 year-old set. There is no way the feds can monitor who hears and sees the ads and that is why Catholic parents have every right to complain about government usurpation of their authority.

"In the states, there is the example of the Department of Public Health in Massachusetts aligning itself with Planned Parenthood to devise a comprehensive sex education program.

Not only do the curricula proposals obviate the will of Catholic parents, the conference proceedings that led to these proposals were laced with anti-Catholic and anti-Christian references.

“And at the local level, New York City has now embarked on an aggressive subway poster campaign, extending to Gay Men’s Health Crisis the right to display its ads without paying for anything but an installation fee. Catholic parents, obviously, can no more stop their children from seeing these ads—all of which are characteristically provocative—than they can any others. As any New Yorker will testify, those who ride subways constitute a captive audience and cannot easily choose which ads to read.

“‘The problem, in short, is the diminution of rights exercised by Catholic parents. An important exercise of religious freedom is the right of parents to inculcate their religious values into their children. While no right is absolute, the degree to which government anti-AIDS programs have trespassed on these rights is alarming.

“So as not to be misunderstood, the Catholic League fully supports anti-AIDS efforts. But it also believes that Catholic parental rights should not be jettisoned in the process.’

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights is the nation’s largest Catholic civil rights organization.

It defends the right of all Catholics—lay and clergy alike—to participate in American life without defamation or discrimination.