

DANA NESSEL OVERRIDES RELIGIOUS FREEDOM LAW

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel's attack on religious freedom:

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel is keeping her campaign promise to put her radical agenda ahead of the best interests of children.

In 2015, Michigan's legislature passed a law to protect the religious freedom of faith-based foster care and adoption agencies, assuring that they wouldn't be forced to choose between their values and their mission to find homes for children. The bill was supported by the Michigan Catholic Conference.

Nessel, outspoken in her opposition to the law, promised that as Michigan's top law enforcement official she *would not defend* this state law against a pending legal challenge by the ACLU of Michigan.

Now she has made good on that promise. In a settlement with the ACLU, she has decreed that the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services must end state contracts with faith-based agencies, rather than allow them to make child placement decisions in accord with their religious beliefs.

Once again, Nessel demonstrates her contempt for the First Amendment's guarantee of religious freedom, decreeing that faith-based agencies must check their religious principles at the door before they will be allowed to provide services for children in need.

She also demonstrates her contempt for the democratic process of her home state, arbitrarily overriding a law duly enacted by Michigan's elected representatives.

Worst of all, by excluding faith-based agencies from the state's foster care and adoption program, Nessel shows utter contempt for all the children served by those agencies. As the Michigan Catholic Conference observed, this settlement "does nothing to protect the thousands of children in foster care looking for loving homes."

But that is of little concern to Nessel, an ideological extremist who has repeatedly demonstrated her animus toward the Catholic Church and people of faith. We expect her decision will be challenged in the courts.

Contact Kelly Rossman-McKinney, Nessel's director of communications: rossmanmckinney@mi.gov