

Archdiocese of Cincinnati Statement on the Amos Project in Response to Recent Attacks
on the Center for Community Change and Catholic Campaign for Human Development
February 2010

Once again, the American Life League (ALL), Bellarmine Veritas Ministries, and other national organizations have coordinated an attack against the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) administration of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). This time, they are alleging that USCCB senior staff person, John Carr, who oversees CCHD, supported pro-abortion and other anti-Catholic policies because he once served on the board of the national organization, Center for Community Change (CCC). Mr. Carr has pointed out that the organization took no such stands during the time that he was affiliated with it, and he has received the support of the U.S. bishops, their Pro-Life Office, Fr. Frank Pavone and many others.

One of the main allegations against CCC is that it has taken pro-abortion positions, including opposing the Stupak Amendment language to prohibit federal funding of abortions in the recent healthcare bill. Included in this attack, ALL and others identify 31 CCHD-funded groups from around the country who are "partners" of CCC. Through guilt by association, they suggest that these groups are also supporters of such policies. One of these groups is the Amos Project, which is currently receiving a national CCHD grant in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Amos is a congregation-based, community organization that works on social justice issues in the Greater Cincinnati area and counts 9 Catholic parishes as members. Amos also received two grants from CCC for non-partisan voter registration work in 2007 and 2008. We cannot speak to the validity of the allegations against the CCC. However, we have never experienced the Amos Project taking a pro-abortion position or contradicting fundamental Church teaching. To the contrary, last fall, the president of Amos, Pastor Gregory Chandler and St. Vivian Catholic Church pastor, Fr. Paul Gephardt jointly wrote a letter to both U.S. Senators in Ohio urging them not to include federal funding for abortion in healthcare legislation. Neither ALL nor any of the other national groups spreading rumors about these organizations contacted the Archdiocese or the Amos Project to learn any of this.

The fact is the reports from these groups that have been critical of CCHD are not always well researched and credible. Our experience has been that these indiscriminate attacks against the reputations of organizations across the country, many of them sincerely trying to live out a Christian vocation to empower the poor to overcome poverty, are launched without any attempt to learn about the context of their relationships or the good work that they are doing in their local communities. Individual Catholics may agree or disagree with decisions of prudential judgment that these CCHD-funded organizations may take on issues of social justice, but to attack them as contrary to the teachings of the Church without justification is wrong. Moreover, we believe that, without real evidence or an attempt to express their concerns to the local diocese, they are planting seeds of doubt about the Catholic Church's decision to support their effective efforts to help the poor help themselves.

The Catholic Social Action Office and our Archdiocesan CCHD Committee are committed to ensuring that no organizations receiving funding engage in any activity that attacks the sanctity of human life or is contrary to Catholic teaching. This relates to both those organizations from the Archdiocese applying for local CCHD dollars, over which we have complete oversight, and for national CCHD support, which also requires the Archdiocese's endorsement. We require all funded organizations to sign a statement, "Basic Principles of Catholic Mission for CCHD," which obliges them to not promote abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, or any other affront to human life and dignity. If anyone believes that any CCHD-funded groups are violating this policy, then we ask that they contact us, so that we can investigate.

For responses from the U.S. bishops to past allegations by American Life League and other groups, please visit: <http://www.usccb.org/cchd/fundingpractices.shtml>.