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Signature Drives

In the coming days you may be approached by supporters of statewide ballot initiatives for the purpose of collecting signatures on Church property. Signature gathering is one of the first steps to qualify for an official question to be placed on the ballot the following November.

As a reminder, at the direction of the four Ordinaries, the Massachusetts Catholic Conference (MCC) issued a signature drive policy in September 2019. The Ordinaries have approved the same policy for 2021 and is attached for your review.

For your information, this year there are two specific signature drives that are noteworthy:

The first is an INITIATIVE PETITION FOR A LAW TO PRESERVE THE LIVES OF CHILDREN BORN ALIVE. While the decision is yours to make in accordance with the policy, Cardinal O'Malley strongly **encourages** you to allow for the gathering of signatures for this petition as it is a pro-life petition seeking to protect babies born alive and is clearly in accordance with the teachings of the Church.

The second is an INITIATIVE PETITION FOR A LAW TO REQUIRE VOTER IDENTIFICATION IN MASSACHUSETTS. It is not the policy of the Archdiocese of Boston or the MCC to support this petition and we strongly urge you to refrain from allowing signature gathering on Church property. This petition ignores the recognition of the effects of past unjust discrimination against the minority and immigrant communities and may prevent and discourage certain eligible individuals from exercising their right to vote. Furthermore, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops has urged leaders at the federal level to consider the effects of unjust past discrimination in enactment of any laws related to voting rights.

If you have any questions, please contact James F. Driscoll, Executive Director, Massachusetts Catholic Conference at jdriscoll@macatholic.org or 617-746-5630.



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Policy Regarding Signature Drive Campaigns on Church Property

Background

Next month, and continuing through November 17, 2021, efforts will begin by several advocacy groups to gather thousands of signatures from voters across the state. Those efforts will be taking place as the next step in the qualification process to place a question on the ballot for November 2022 or November 2024 statewide elections. The ballot questions, if approved by the voters, would enact new laws and /or amend the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The purpose of this directive is to set forth the policy of the Bishops in the event requests are made by advocates to collect signatures on Church property. The policy is identical to the one issued on September 10, 2019.

Policy

1. The decision to allow signature gathering will be at the sole discretion of the Pastor/Administrator of the Church provided that any petition approved by the Pastor/Administrator must be in accordance with the teachings of the Church.
2. Signature gathering must take place at a designated location(s) on the property away from the flow of parishioners approaching or departing Holy Mass. The location shall be determined by the Pastor/Administrator.
3. The Pastor/Administrator shall decide the appropriate method of communicating to the parishioners the fact that petitions are available for signing at the designated location(s). Announcements at the beginning or end of Mass, bulletin inserts, email notifications, etc. are suggested means of communication.
4. All written materials which are proposed to be distributed on Church property or printed in the bulletins must be approved in advance by the Massachusetts Catholic Conference.

Please direct your questions and proposed written material to: James F. Driscoll, Executive Director, Massachusetts Catholic Conference at 617-746-5620 or jdriscoll@macatholic.org

August 23, 2021