

# CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO

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May 28, 2021

## **Jerry Freewalt named Executive Director for the Catholic Conference of Ohio**

The Board of Directors of the Catholic Conference of Ohio is pleased to announce the appointment of Jerry Freewalt as the Conference's new Executive Director.

Jerry comes to the Conference from the Diocese of Columbus, where he currently serves as Director of the Office for Social Concerns, a post he has held since 2018. During his twenty-six years in the Office for Social Concerns, Jerry has been engaged in public policy at the local, state, and national levels. He has a strong background in advocacy and programming related to respect for life, poverty, hunger, agriculture, immigration, prison ministry, human trafficking, death penalty, persons with disabilities, international assistance, care for creation and other issues related to charity and social justice.

Freewalt was an integral advocate for the *Multi-System Youth Custody Relinquishment Fund* that was enacted in the 2019-20 state budget and is currently advocating for the establishment of the *OhioRISE* Medicaid managed care program in Ohio's next state budget. When approved, this \$1 billion program will assist 60,000 youth with complex behavioral health needs.

Jerry serves on the OhioRISE Advisory Board, the Ohio Children's Behavioral Health Prevention Network Stakeholder Group, and the Advisory Board of J.O.I.N. (Joint Organization for Inner-City Needs). He previously chaired the Board of the Directors for the National Catholic Partnership on Disability, as well as the Catholic Conference of Ohio's Department of Social Concerns.

He has a master's degree in Public Policy and Management from the Ohio State University and a bachelor's degree in political science from Xavier University in Cincinnati. He and his wife, Karen, have three children. They are members of St. Margaret of Cortona Parish in Columbus.

In announcing the appointment, Archbishop Dennis Schnurr stated, "Jerry's dedication and experience in service to the Church have been recognized nationally, statewide, and throughout the Columbus Diocese. The Bishops of Ohio look forward to his leadership as the Conference's new executive director."

"I am honored to have the opportunity to use my gifts as executive director," said Freewalt. "I look forward to living out my vocation in this new role as a voice for the Church in advancing the common good."

Jerry succeeds Carolyn Jurkowitz, who is retiring from the Conference after thirty-four years. He will assume his new position on August 1.