**Summary:** For years, Michigan Catholic Conference (MCC) supported a state budget program that assists women in crisis or unexpected pregnancies and their children. Through the program, women receive counseling, parenting classes, adoption information, referrals for pre and post-natal care, and material items, all at no cost. While the program enjoyed wide legislative support, the governor’s office indicated she would likely veto any pro-life policy, which raised concerns about the future of the program. MCC’s column highlighted the significance of the services, especially for vulnerable and low-income women, and shared real client stories. The op/ed format was chosen because it prevented MCC’s message from being diminished by a particular journalist’s perspective.

**Research:** MCC wanted to increase public support for the policy. From past experiences, MCC had seen how effective personal stories could be in achieving that goal. Staff gathered program statistics and client stories from Real Alternatives, the organization operating the Michigan program. At the same time, MCC researched abortion statistic trends from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Staff also considered leading concerns cited by program opponents, recognizing that the piece must directly address those concerns.

**Planning:** ***The main objectives of this column*** were to increase public support for the Michigan Pregnancy and Parenting Support Services Program, to demonstrate public support to lawmakers, and to put pressure on the governor to retain the funding in the final budget. ***The target audience*s** were community members and likely voters that read certain Michigan newspapers (mostly local). Each newspaper was targeted because it either: 1) was nearby or covered an area with a local Michigan Pregnancy and Parenting Support Services Program agency, or 2) in the cases of the Lansing State Journal and Bridge Magazine, had a popular following with members of the political community. These audiences seemed to be the best target, as they could more easily see the physical impact of services in their local community and thus, were more likely to advocate for its value with a little information. ***The planning process included*** discussions about messaging and target newspapers with MCC staff. ***The overall strategy*** was to publish the columns across the state to drum up support for the program in September, prior to the Legislature’s passage and governor’s consideration of the final 2019-2020 state budget. ***The budget of the piece*** was negligible; it was written by a full-time staff member.

**Execution:** Staff gathered data and stories from the Michigan Pregnancy and Parenting Support Services Program, so that the piece could be localized depending on where it was placed. Using that information, MCC wrote the op/ed piece over the course of several days. Four staff members and the Executive Director of Real Alternatives reviewed the column before sending it to the relevant newspapers. Versions of the column were published by *Bridge Magazine, Lansing State Journal, Macomb Daily, Mount Pleasant Morning Sun, Oakland Press, Royal Oak Daily Tribune, The Detroit News, The Holland Sentinel,* and *Traverse City Record Eagle*. Having the op/ed placed online allowed for staff to share the widely via email and social media.

**Evaluation: While ultimately the governor vetoed the program, the op/ed brought the issue wider public attention.**

* ***Legislative Support:*** MCC shared the piece with leaders of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, as well as relevant staff members, which they said helped them advocate for the program.
* ***Media Estimated Audience Rates:*** According to our media monitoring platform, the estimated audience of the pieces included: 9,644 (*Macomb Daily*), 9,206 (*Mt. Pleasant Morning Sun*), 17,974 (*Oakland Press*), 1,973 (*Royal Oak Daily Tribune*), 296,784 (*The Detroit News*), 7,891 (The *Holland Sentinel*), 35,537 (*Lansing State Journal*) and 12,275 (*Traverse City Record Eagle*). *Bridge* data was not available.
* ***Social Media:*** On MCC’s Facebook, a 9/16 post reached 878 people and received 48 engagements, including 35 likes/loves, 13 shares, and 34 post clicks. On Twitter, a 9/25 tweet received 367 impressions, with 2 link clicks, and 1 retweet. A 9/27 tweet received 312 impressions, with 7 link clicks.
* ***Continued Action:*** While the program did not remain in the final budget, conversations continue today about potentially restoring the item in the 2020-2021 state budget.