

Executive Director, James King attends 2025 Catholic Social Ministries Gathering

This week over five hundred Catholics from around the country gathered in Washington, D.C. for the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering. Attendees spent three days working to identify how the Catholic Church can play a greater role in addressing a broad range of issues including immigration, poverty reduction, tax reform, human trafficking, and the environment. The event concludes with attendees going to the Capitol to meet with their Congressional delegation.

This year, New Jersey had six representatives attend the conference and participate in the meetings with members of New Jersey's Congressional delegation. For James King, executive director of the New Jersey Catholic Conference, this was his 13th time attending the conference and his 12th time serving as the state captain, the person responsible for organizing and leading the congressional meetings.

Mr. King offered the following comments on the gathering and meetings, "It is always a blessing to participate in the United States Conference Catholic Bishops' Catholic Social Ministry Gathering, especially, the meetings at the Capitol. It is a privilege to go with the other participants to meet with members of our state's Congressional delegation. He continued, "the elected officials and their staffers really appreciate hearing from the participants and their stories as we discuss federal anti-poverty programs, immigration reform, and international humanitarian aid. The participants bring a real-world perspective to these issues that too often are lost in the general debate on how society should address these issues."

This year's Hill visits were especially important, due to the current climate surrounding immigration and federal spending. The New Jersey delegation utilized the congressional meetings to express the Church's solidarity with our immigrant brothers and sisters as well as our concern that the recent freeze on federal funding could cause serious harm to the most vulnerable in our society. Mr. King shared, "The group expressed that the Catholic Church supports comprehensive immigration reform, which includes reasonable and proportionate measures to protect our nation's borders, and the government's efforts to eliminate fraud and wasteful spending from federal programs. However, any effort to address these issues must prioritize the protection of the dignity of individuals and families, especially those struggling with poverty and the vulnerable."

In summing up the meetings, Mr. King thinks the meetings were positive and effective, "the Congressional offices seemed receptive to our message and more importantly expressed a desire for ongoing dialogue. Our meetings at the Capitol should not focus on winning arguments, but rather they should be about building relationships."

Mr. King concluded with, "I do not think it was coincidence that the day following our meetings on the hill the administration rescinded their order to freeze all federal funding. This is prime example that, in a time when harsh talking points focused on demonizing your political opponents, the ability to speak truth with charity can go a long way."