

CCHD pulls funding from two agencies

Dennis Sadowski | Catholic News Service | Sep. 24, 2009

WASHINGTON -- The Catholic Campaign for Human Development, CCHD, has canceled grants to two organizations after learning about their involvement in activities contrary to church teaching and is studying the actions of two other groups.

Ralph McCloud, executive director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' anti-poverty program, told Catholic News Service Sept. 23 funding was canceled for two San Francisco-based organizations, the Chinese Progressive Association and Young Workers United.

The Chinese Progressive Association, which works to improve working conditions and advance social and economic justice for Chinese immigrants, was set to receive \$30,000. Young Workers United, a coalition advocating for the rights of low-wage service-sector employees, was awarded a \$25,000 grant during the 2009-10 funding cycle, according to CCHD records.

McCloud said the funding was canceled after he learned that both organizations had advocated that its members vote "no" in the November 2008 election on an amendment to the California state constitution that defined marriage as the union of one man and one woman. In the same election, the workers group also urged San Francisco voters to adopt a citywide proposition that would have decriminalized prostitution.

The marriage amendment passed, while the prostitution initiative failed.

Information about the two organizations was brought to light by the Bellarmine Veritas Ministry, which describes itself on its Web site as a "grass-roots organizing ministry dedicated to truth and action."

Rob Gasper of Tomball, Texas, who founded the ministry, told CNS Sept. 24 he was pleased that CCHD withdrew funding from the two organizations.

"It shows some good faith on their part, but we don't think that's quite enough," he said. "It addresses the current problem, but we don't think this will address problems in the future."

What's needed, Gasper said, are stronger filters to ensure that any organization that seeks CCHD funding upholds church teaching.

McCloud expressed gratitude for Gasper's diligence, saying he welcomed "the extra eyes and ears that are out there looking at funded groups."

"We want to ensure that our groups are consistently following the teaching of the church," McCloud said. "To the degree we can get some help with that, we're grateful for it."

The activities of the Chinese Progressive Association dating to 2005, the first year CCHD funded the group, also are being reviewed, McCloud said. If any of the group's activities in the past are found to oppose church teaching, the organization will be asked to refund its CCHD funding, he told CNS.

McCloud also said more information is being sought from two other community organizations: the Los Angeles Community Action Network and the Women's Community Revitalization Project in Philadelphia.

The Bellarmine Web site claims the community action network, which works on housing issues and advocates on behalf of homeless people, has supported same-sex marriage and promotes contraception at a health clinic it operates with other organizations in downtown Los Angeles.

The network was awarded a \$40,000 grant in June and it remains in place. Since 2005, it has received an additional \$90,000 in CCHD funds for its work on housing issues and advocacy on behalf of homeless people.

The Philadelphia group has partnered with WomenVote PA, which opposes an amendment to the Pennsylvania state constitution banning same-sex marriage and has supported comprehensive reproductive health services, including abortion and emergency contraception for rape and incest victims.

McCloud said a fifth group, Rebecca Project for Human Rights in Washington, was denied funding this year after his office learned that some of the organization's activities were contrary to church teaching. He was not more specific. The organization had received grants totaling \$95,000 since 2005.

"There are so many screens along the way," McCloud said about the process of determining which programs get funded. "We have the local (committees) looking at the organization, the local diocesan director. The local bishops will sign off and endorse the organization. Then national staff will have interviews and interact with the group.

"Even then, sometimes you will find organizations that will either shift philosophies or change missions or go in another direction in between funding times," he said. "I think we're working extremely diligently to make sure that organizations are following church teaching."

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