

To: Interested Parties

From: Jamie Manson, M.Div., President of Catholics for Choice

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Date: November 10, 2023

Re: Dark Money Spent by Anti-Choice Catholics in Ohio Elections

Top Line: Catholics for Choice – which represents the majority Catholic opinion on abortion — has been able to document at least \$12.4 million of Catholic money poured into the losing Protect Women Ohio campaign opposing Issue 1, according to [campaign filings](#) with the Ohio Secretary of State as of 10/18/2023:

- \$2,717,496.59 from Ohio’s Catholic bishops and other Catholic-affiliated groups
- \$9,700,000 from the Leonard Leo-linked Concord Fund

That Catholic money represents nearly half (46%) of the [total contributions](#) the Protect Women Ohio campaign received (\$26.96 million as of 10/18/2023).

Of the **\$2,717,496.59** (as of 10/18/2023), contributions came from:

- Ohio Catholic dioceses (Cincinnati, Columbus, and Cleveland) donated a combined \$1.7 million
- The Knights of Columbus, a far-right lay fraternal group based in New Haven, CT, gave \$1 million
- 15 Knights of Columbus councils, Catholic parishes, and other Ohio groups gave another \$17,496.59

This amount is far exceeded by the cash poured into the race by the Concord Fund, which according to [OpenSecrets.org](#) gave \$16.9 million to “Protect Women Ohio Action, Inc.” This Arlington, VA-based group turned around and gave **\$9.7 million of that to the [Protect Women Ohio campaign](#)** (as of 10/18/2023):

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| • \$2,000,000
in July 2023 | • \$3,000,000
in September 2023 | • \$4,700,000
in October 2023 |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|

According to reporting by [Politico](#) and [The New York Times](#), the Concord Fund is an alias of **the Judicial Crisis Network — part of a shadowy network of right-wing, dark-money groups directed by Catholic judicial activist Leonard Leo** that was instrumental in getting Justices Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, and Barrett nominated and confirmed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Leo, the same ultra-conservative Catholic who engineered the Catholic-dominated Supreme Court that struck down *Roe*, spent millions of dollars trying to stop an abortion rights amendment in Ohio — and lost.

The Catholic hierarchy and their dark-money allies are out of touch, no matter what they say or spend:

- [63% of Catholics think abortion should be legal in all or most cases](#)
- [68% of Catholics did not want to see *Roe v. Wade* overturned](#)
- [1 in 4 abortion patients in the U.S. is Catholic](#)

Catholics for Choice spent a small fraction of the money [the bishops spent](#) to combat their disinformation, setting up **47 billboards across the state** that told the truth about Catholic support for abortion rights. We also invested in a full-time, Ohio-based field organizer who hosted more than 20 in-person organizing events and distributed thousands of pro-choice Catholic postcards in support of Issue 1.

On Election Day, when 56% of Ohio voters approved Issue 1, it passed with majority support for Issue 1 in the Dioceses of Cincinnati (52%), Cleveland (65.7%), Columbus (59.7%), and Youngstown (56.2%). The votes

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of pro-choice Catholics proved essential in the Buckeye State, as they have in every game-changing ballot measure since *Roe* was overturned.

State constitutional amendments are at the forefront of our work to secure abortion rights in a post-*Dobbs* world, but we know that our opposition — a religious force spearheaded by the U.S. Catholic bishops and fueled by dark money — will fight them every step of the way. Catholics for Choice is uniquely positioned to truthfully counter the hierarchy's distortions, and we'll be ready to do just that.