

TO: Health & Human Services Committee
FROM: Marion Miner, Associate Director of Pro-Life & Family Policy
Nebraska Catholic Conference
DATE: February 3, 2023
RE: LB345 (Define Palliative Care) (Support)

The Nebraska Catholic Conference advocates for the public policy interests of the Catholic Church and advances the Gospel of Life through engaging, educating, and empowering public officials, Catholic laity, and the general public. I am here today to express the Conference's support for LB345, which would define palliative care and distinguish it more clearly from hospice.

The goal of good palliative care is to promote a suffering person's overall good, whether that person is near death, as in hospice care, or not.

Health care today, as we all know, is highly specialized, which in some cases can lead to fragmentation and a lack of coordination among specialists. Fragmentation and lack of coordination are realities that palliative care seeks to overcome by taking a holistic view of a patient's care and, in doing so, recognizing the big picture. It can then coordinate the care plan among various specialties to promote the patient's overall good—physical, psychological, social, and spiritual.¹ In Catholic and many other health care settings, palliative care recognizes and addresses not only physical, but also psychological, emotional, and spiritual symptoms resulting from illness and suffering.

Palliative care is not reserved for one specific group or purpose; it exists for the benefit of all who suffer. LB345 makes that clearer. Mitigating the negative effects of suffering—physical, psychological, social, or spiritual—is a moral good.² It would benefit the general public and those in the medical professions to know that palliative care can be offered alongside curative treatment and, in its greater scope, “accomplishes something equally important [to curative treatment]: it values the [whole] person.”³

For these reasons, the Conference supports LB345, and we encourage you to advance it to General File.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ “A Catholic Guide to Palliative Care and Hospice: Resources for Applying Church Teaching to Relieve Pain and Suffering” (2020). Available online:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e3ada1a6a2e8d6a131d1dcd/t/62e2af57aae11523bfe9a94a/1659023193489/20.06.17+Palliative+Care+Guide-English-FULL.pdf>

² *Ibid.*, citing USCCB, *Ethical and Religious Directives*, dir. 61.

³ *Ibid.*, citing Pontifical Academy for Life and United Methodist Church, “Joint Declaration on End of Life and Palliative Care” (2018).