



TO: Appropriations Committee
FROM: Jeremy Ekeler, Associate Director of Education Policy
Nebraska Catholic Conference
DATE: January 25, 2022
RE: LB1014 (Family Directed Education Recovery Accounts) (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 support LB1014’s Family Directed Education Recovery Accounts.

The COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on education has far-reaching negative ramifications. As one article states, “[t]he damage to individuals is consequential, but the consequences could go deeper.”¹ McKinsey and Company has found that the pandemic has left “students on average five months behind in mathematics and four months behind in reading by the end of the [2020-2021] school year.”²

As the data estimates, “unless steps are taken to address unfinished learning, today’s students may earn \$49,000 to \$61,000 less over their lifetime” and “[t]he impact on the US economy could amount to \$128 billion to \$188 billion every year as this cohort enters the workforce.”³ Sadly, these learning loss impacts—not to mention the mental health impacts—and the economic fallout that will follow will be experienced most by “low-income, black, and Hispanic students” who, already pre-pandemic, were experiencing these disparities.⁴

These same low-income, black, and Hispanic families that have been most impacted by learning losses are also the same families that the Urban Institute reported additional significant economic hardship and financial instability throughout this pandemic.⁵ Such circumstances have made it all

¹ Emma Dorn, Bryan Hancock, Jimmy Sarakatsannis, and Ellen Viruleg, “COVID-19 and the student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime,” McKinsey and Company, June 1, 2020, available at <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-student-learning-in-the-united-states-the-hurt-could-last-a-lifetime> (last accessed on Jan. 24, 2022).

² Emma Dorn, Bryan Hancock, Jimmy Sarakatsannis, and Ellen Viruleg, “COVID-19 and education: The lingering effects of unfinished learning,” McKinsey and Company, July 27, 2021, available at <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning#> (last accessed on Jan. 24, 2022).

³ Ibid.

⁴ See footnote 1. See also Nebraska Department of Education, *Nebraska’s State Plan: Planning for Renewal and Acceleration—American Rescue Plan and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund*, October 2021, pages 7-11 (detailing various disparities in education for various vulnerable populations), available at <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/10/Nebraska-ARP-ESSER-State-Plan-Final.pdf> (last accessed Jan. 24, 2022).

⁵ Michael Karpman, Dulce Gonzalez, and Genevieve M. Kenney, “Parents Are Struggling to Provide for Their Families during the Pandemic: Material Hardships Greatest among Low-Income, Black, and Hispanic Parents,”

the more difficult for these families to “pursue supplemental and alternative educational opportunities” at the same “higher rates” of families who have financial means.⁶ Ultimately, the families disproportionately impacted by the pandemic experienced increased educational costs at a time when financial circumstances were already constrained, if not worse.⁷

It is in this context that we urge the Appropriations Committee to adopt the Governor’s Family-Directed Education Recovery Accounts. The Education Recovery Accounts will, in a targeted and efficient fashion, get assistance into the hands of low-income families whose children have been hardest hit during this pandemic as envisioned by ARPA’s Final Rule.⁸ These funds are available to all students—public, non-public, or home-school—as we know COVID-19 did not discriminate against anybody. The funds are also designated for strict uses, such as tutoring, curriculum, tuition, or other educational services, to ensure that learning losses will be addressed. This temporary pilot program will also require student performance data collection to better understand its positive impacts on students.

I spent 18 years as an educator in schools and I learned that kids get one shot at a formative K-12 education. COVID-19 has significantly ruptured and drastically affected this “one shot” for far too many kids. But with the Family-Directed Education Recovery Accounts, Nebraska can utilize a critical tool for putting our state’s most impacted children back on course for a bright future.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Urban Institute, May 2020, available at https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/102254/parents-are-struggling-to-provide-for-their-families-during-the-pandemic_1.pdf (last accessed Jan. 24, 2022).

⁶ John P. Bailey, “education Recovery Benefits: Using Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to Address Children’s Academic, Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs,” AEI, July 2021, available at <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Education-Recovery-Benefits.pdf?x91208> (last accessed Jan. 24, 2022).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See U.S. Department of Treasury, *Final Rule for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds* (effective date April 1, 2022), see pages 100-102 (section entitled “9. Addressing the impacts of lost instructional time.”).