

**Catholic Charities of Omaha Testimony in favor of LB 78**

Hello, my name is Jacquelyn LaPlant. I am the Chief Advocacy Officer at Catholic Charities of Omaha, located in Douglas County, in Omaha, Nebraska. I am here today in support of LB 78.

Catholic Charities of Omaha has served Nebraska for nearly 100 years. For over 55 years, our Domestic Violence Shelter has served as the ONLY dedicated domestic violence shelter in Douglas County. **We serve all – whoever comes to us in need.** Our Domestic Violence Services Program is one of six core programs that annually serve over 325,000 people in 40+ Nebraska counties.

**In 2024, Catholic Charities provided nearly 5,000 nights of secure and confidential shelter for women, men, and children facing domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking.** We work closely with local hospitals and law enforcement, and other agencies, as well as operate a 24/7 DV Hotline to connect Survivors to our program. We offer more than a safe place to stay. Most Survivors come to Catholic Charities with only the clothes on their backs – we become their literal lifeline.

Our trained Advocates holistically support every person we serve. At Catholic Charities, Survivors have access to a secure and nurturing shelter, basic supplies, 24/7 Advocate support, education, case management, a connection to our Market choice pantry, child advocacy programming, and access to our mental health therapists. Every resource is centered on one goal: building Survivor empowerment.

This requires access to housing. Throughout their 28-day stay, we help Survivors identify housing resources – one of the strongest barriers in doing so is lack of access to financial resources for housing assistance and services. Once we help a Survivor find housing it is often their inability to pay a security deposit, application fee, or a substantial rental deposit that prevents them from moving forward.

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*Archdiocese of Omaha*

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*Koley Jessen, PC, LLO*

Susan Haddix,  
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*Community Volunteer*

Beth Eliason  
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Denise Bartels  
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**Catholic Charities of Omaha**

**St. Teresa of Calcutta Campus**  
*9223 Bedford Ave  
Omaha, NE 68134*

**St. Juan Diego Center**  
*5211 South 31st Street  
Omaha, NE 68107*

**St. Martin de Porres Center**  
*2111 Emmet Street  
Omaha, NE 68110*

Research – *and over 55 years of experience in helping Survivors overcome violence* – have proven that to thrive after escape, Survivors need access to shelter, support, resources, **and** housing. Truly, our work is life-changing, and often lifesaving. Every part of our program is provided at no cost to Survivors – this is a mission-driven program.

Without stable housing, it's almost impossible to address the deeper needs of survivors, as they may be forced to return to their abuser or face homelessness. This is a major barrier to recovery and safety.

As Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs – a well-known and respected research model – confirms, housing is THE foundation for all other aspects of well-being and recovery. Without it, individuals can't effectively begin to rebuild their lives, regain stability, or pursue goals like employment, education, or personal development. Housing is not just a basic need; it's a critical stepping stone toward independence and healing.

Freedom is powerful. LB 78 is a bill about freedom. LB 78 will enable Catholic Charities – and organizations like ours – to help Survivors step out of the darkness of violence and into a future that is free from fear, from the weight of silence, from the constant vigilance. LB 78 will help Survivors gain housing, breaking the isolation and control that once defined their world, giving them a strength they never knew they had.

The road to escape violence and abuse isn't easy. But with support of LB 78, Survivors can find their voice, courage, worth ... and a new, powerful beginning.

Thank you for your time. We urge you to advance this bill out of committee and I would be willing to take any questions now.