



TO: Health & Human Services Committee  
FROM: Tom Venzor, Executive Director  
Nebraska Catholic Conference  
DATE: February 12, 2025  
RE: LB481 (Foster Care Child Scholarships Act) (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.

The Nebraska Catholic Conference supports LB481, which would provide an education scholarship program for foster care children to attend a school of their choice. The NCC supports LB481 for two key reasons.

First, foster parents (alongside of other key decision-makers) must have the ability to determine the best educational setting for their foster children. This is a fundamental right that belongs to parents when caring for their children. This need becomes even more pertinent when caring for a child who is otherwise experiencing the instability and challenges of being in the child welfare system. As the US Department of Education states: "Data show that foster youth are more likely than their peers to experience a host of barriers that lead to troubling outcomes, including low academic achievement, grade retention and lower high school graduation rates." Foster parents must be supported in their efforts to help their foster child to flourish and succeed, especially in their educational environment, to overcome these barriers and outcomes.

Second, children in foster care should very much be considered, in the words of Matthew 25, "the least of these, my brethren." In other words, as a community, we owe a greater duty and responsibility of caring for the needs of children in foster care. We must ensure that personal and social systems are in place that help them flourish as a human person. Education is one of the most critical aspects of a child's formation, and ensuring the right educational setting for children is paramount. This paramount concern is even more critical when it pertains to those who have difficulties finding the right school and ensuring they have the financial resources to choose the school that is best for them. Foster children, then, and their foster parents should be supported, including by state-funded scholarship programs, to obtain an educational setting that is best for them, including approved or accredited nonpublic schools throughout the state of Nebraska.

Again, we respectfully urge this committee to advance LB481, as it is a small but important programmatic step forward for helping foster children throughout our state to experience stability and achieve academic excellence and flourish as a human person.

Thank you for your time and consideration.