



TO: Education Committee
FROM: Jeremy Ekeler, Associate Director of Education Policy
Nebraska Catholic Conference
DATE: February 14, 2022
RE: LB902 (Career Scholarships) (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.

On behalf of our 110 Nebraska Catholic schools, serving over 26,000 students, I am here in support of Senator Aguilar's LB902. We thank the Senator for targeting statewide workforce issues via pathways to education.

LB902 takes what was an Appropriation bill and creates stand-alone legislation providing \$13 million in funding for students entering fields of need. The scholarship is renewed for up to four years as long as the student stays in the eligible program of study. Some examples of how this is allocated are as follows:

- \$5000 scholarships per year for eligible community college students
- \$15,000 scholarships per year for state college students who score at least an 18 out of 36 on their ACT
- \$25,000 scholarships per year for state college students who score at least 28 out of 36 on their ACT
- \$10,000 per year for private postsecondary institutions for students who score at least an 18 on their ACT.
- \$10,000 per year for transfer students

There are three components of this bill that we especially appreciate. First, each scholarship recipient is asked to take part in a Nebraska-based internship, apprenticeship, clinical position, or employment in the field of study. This real-world, experiential learning aspect is valuable to the students.

Secondly, we appreciate the cycle of review every four years to determine which programs of study are most needed. We appreciate that flexibility very much because our state's workforce issues are fluid and will continue to be so.

Thirdly, this bill is in Education Committee as much because it engages more students in post-secondary education as because it helps address the teacher workforce shortage. Before the pandemic, 44% of educators quit the profession within five years.¹ Now, during the pandemic,

¹ <https://teachercareercoach.com/why-teachers-quit/>

54% of teachers are considering leaving the profession within two years.² All schools – public and nonpublic – are facing the same crisis in finding new teachers. The work of addressing this issue is multi-faceted. It includes removing barriers for future teachers, alleviating college debt, and making the profession more attractive. We believe LB902 is helpful in these regards.

In closing, LB902 is a great example of what education can and should look like. The state of Nebraska is committing dollars to students so they can find the school that best fits their needs. Along the way, that student is in formation to help make Nebraska an even better place. This approach of the educational community coming together to empower students is a successful formula we are happy to support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

² <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/why-teachers-leave-or-dont-a-look-at-the-numbers/2021/05>