



TO: Health & Human Services Committee
FROM: Tom Venzor, Executive Director
Nebraska Catholic Conference
DATE: February 12, 2025
RE: LB181 (Bridge to Independence Eligibility for Undocumented Migrants) (Cavanaugh)

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 wishes to express its support for LB181, which would allow young adults who are undocumented migrants to have access to the Bridge to Independence program, a program they could otherwise access but for their immigration status.

When advocating on immigration policy, the Catholic Church is guided by several principles, which include the recognition of both the rights of sovereign nations to protect and control their borders and the rights of persons migrating because of economic necessity or other hardships in order to meet their basic human needs.

As Pope Francis said in a recently issued letter on the topic of immigration addressed to the U.S. Bishops: “[T]he Christian faithful and all people of good will are called upon to consider the legitimacy of norms and public policies in the light of the dignity of the person and his or her fundamental rights[.]” This dignity of the human person is “infinite and transcendent” and “surpasses and sustains every other juridical consideration that can be made to regulate life in society.”¹

It is with these principles in mind that the NCC urges this committee’s support for LB181. Young adults who have grown up in our communities (perhaps since their infancy) and are currently undocumented in our country through no fault of their own live in a vulnerable and difficult situation, not to mention a legally precarious one. These difficulties and vulnerabilities are only exacerbated by other challenges, such as having been in the foster care system.

Bridge to Independence provides important continued supports to those who have been in our foster care system and have been previously cared for by the state, regardless of their immigration status. It ensures that each of these young adults receives the option to receive case management, health care, and monthly financial assistance to help with the cost of living. Bridge to Independence provides social structures that provide some level of community support to individuals who are largely navigating the difficulties of early adulthood on their own. This state

¹ Pope Francis, “Letter of the Holy Father Francis to the Bishops of the United States of America,” sent on February 10, 2025, accessible at <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2025/documents/20250210-lettera-vescovi-usa.html> (last accessed on February 12, 2025).

support comes as a supplement to the other charitable works of so many individuals and other forms of communities, such as churches, provide.

While there is a lot of discussion taking place right now in our local, state, and national communities about immigration enforcement and immigration reform, one thing is clear: there is a growing consensus to ensure that young adults who are in the country undocumented through no fault of their own are provided a path forward to establish legal presence and citizenship. LB181 is forward thinking in these regard, to ensure that we are caring for those who have, currently, and will for the long-term belong to our community.

By providing Bridge to Independence services to undocumented young adult migrants, the legislature would not only be doing what is just for these relatively few young adults who could access these services but the legislature would be ensuring that these young adults are cared for because they will be part of our communities for the long term. In either case, it is in the best interest of the state to make sure these young adults are assisted—in the same way other young adults are—to get the best start they can on their way to independent living after spending time in foster care.

Again, we urge you to advance this commonsense legislation to General File. Thank you for your time and consideration.