



TO: Education Committee
FROM: Jeremy Ekeler, Associate Director of Education Policy
Nebraska Catholic Conference
DATE: January 23, 2023
RE: [LB188] [(Veteran Teaching Opportunity) (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 the three Catholic dioceses in the state of Nebraska, and the 27,000 children we educate, the Nebraska Catholic Conference is proud to support LB188. Generally speaking, the Catholic Conference is in favor of creative and charitable methods of addressing the very real teacher shortage crisis our state and nation are confronting.

In particular, LB188 provides a gateway for Veterans who have served at least 48 months, have 60 college credits, and have maintained at least a 2.5 GPA. Our Catholic school leaders appreciate the concept of this bill because they believe Veterans who meet such standards are likely to be great potential team members on a staff, mentors to children, and leaders in their school communities. In short, while nothing in LB188 requires a principal to hire such a Veteran, this bill does bring attractive and professional candidates into the teaching pool.

Of special note to our administrators was the component related to a mandatory teaching mentor for Veterans. While this sort of dynamic is likely happening organically in nearly all Nebraska schools already, the formalization of it in LB188 is a great touch. While teacher preparation programs are doing their best to form future teachers, nothing beats mentorship and experience. LB188 provides both.

Veterans who take part in this program will see their temporary certificate window expand from the typical two-years to five. This seems appropriate and fair considering the Veteran has given at least four years of his or her life to our country.

At the Nebraska Catholic Conference we are fond of telling our 112 schools that we will continue to support ideas for teacher certification that “keep the bar high” while “widening the path forward”. That’s a hard thing to do but LB188 has found a unique group of folks who are more than capable of hard things – Veterans. We thank and honor them as we ask for your support of LB188.

Thank you for your time and consideration.