



TO: Judiciary Committee
FROM: Jeremy Ekeler, Associate Director of Education Policy
Nebraska Catholic Conference
DATE: February 9, 2022
RE: LB1213 (Requirements for Providers of School Digital Resources) (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 Catholic dioceses in Nebraska take a strong stance in protecting the eyes, minds, and bodies of youth by implementing some of the country's most comprehensive safety measures. Grand Island's "Safe Environment" program educates 6600 children, 500 teachers, 115 clergy, and more than 7000 volunteers.¹ Similarly, the nationally-recognized "Circle of Grace" program originated in the Archdiocese of Omaha² and is now used globally at a wide variety of schools (including those in the Diocese of Lincoln³). So it is no surprise that, on behalf of the 110 Catholic Schools serving over 26,000 students in Nebraska's three dioceses, we support Senator Albrecht's LB1213 as amended to provide protections to schools, families, and most importantly, children.

First, this bill protects children from the most heinous obscenity. Pornography is a national health crisis, and exposure impacts children as early as fourth grade.⁴ This bill targets illegal obscenity as previously defined in Nebraska Statute 28-807 and 28-808. In particular, this bill forces educational research database providers to filter the defined obscenity. Providers do make this pledge, but as you will hear in the testimony, many are not following through. In fact, deeply disturbing content can be unearthed within two minutes and a few clicks.

Secondly, this bill rightly punishes the contracted providers while simultaneously taking the onus off of schools and empowering parents. Schools should not be on the hook to pay for providers who do not fulfill their contracted promises. Most importantly, parents should have recourse when their children are victimized by content they can never "un-see". Having studied the issue, the content I found was disturbing; it could certainly traumatize a child. Incidentally, but not unrelated, one must assume that human trafficking is a contributing factor both in the creation of the content and in the proliferation of this hideous practice.⁵

In discussing this bill with our diocesan technology administrators, it became clear that LB1213 is closing a gap area: "We don't know what we don't know," said one administrator. While our

¹ <https://gidiocese.org/safe-environment-programs>

² <https://archomaha.org/circleofgrace/>

³ <https://www.lincolndiocese.org/protection-of-youth/home>

⁴ <https://fightthenewdrug.org/real-average-age-of-first-exposure/>

⁵ <https://theexodusroad.com/porn-and-human-trafficking-the-facts-you-need-to-know/>

diocesan education offices are committed to CIPA and E-Rate policies, the regulation of providers like those defined in this bill creates more assurance that our schools are complying with safety measures and, most vitally, kids are kept safe.

Considering that such material is displayed by providers under contract with public school tax dollars, and often on devices also paid for with tax dollars, it is even more necessary that LB1213 become law. While our Catholic schools do not receive state funding, we do consider this bill an important one for all children in any Nebraska school.

For a formal copy of this letter with researched footnotes please contact me.

Thank you for your time and consideration!