



TO: Health & Human Services Committee
FROM: Tom Venzor, Executive Director
Nebraska Catholic Conference
DATE: February 6, 2025
RE: LB46 (Restaurant Meals Program) (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 Church in Nebraska runs two major social service agencies: Catholic Charities of Omaha which serves in the Archdiocese of Omaha (covering Omaha and 23 counties throughout northeast Nebraska) and Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska which serves in the Diocese of Lincoln (covering all of Nebraska south of the Platte River). This is in addition, of course, to the countless charitable works that are done at the parish, school, and family level.

Between our two agencies, they provide services such as emergency cash assistance, immigration legal services, refugee resettlement and employment services, mental and behavioral health services, microbusiness and asset development services, family strengthening services, and transitional housing and support for women and children fleeing domestic violence, human trafficking, or are experiencing a crisis pregnancy. For each agency their largest charitable work is emergency and supportive food services.

While our parishes and dioceses across the state do incredible work to meet the needs of those who struggle with food access, the simple fact is we cannot meet everybody's needs. Catholic social teaching instructs us that when needs cannot be adequately met by a more intimate form of community or society (such as the family, a church, the city, etc.), higher forms of community should provide assistance in meeting those needs. Applied to this issue, food assistance is an issue that we must all play a role in, everybody down to each individual all the way up to the federal government.

LB46 would be a sensible addition to the various ways we try to assist with food access for Nebraskans through our participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and provide a means by which—little by little—we meet the needs of those who suffer hunger. LB46 could be of greatest impact in our rural communities where there is a higher likelihood of food deserts, but where restaurants could step up, participate in the program, and provide an additional location where somebody can utilize their SNAP benefits.

We encourage the HHS Committee to advance LB46 to General File. Thank you for your time and consideration.