



TO: Health & Human Services Committee  
FROM: Tom Venzor, Executive Director  
Nebraska Catholic Conference  
DATE: February 21, 2025  
RE: LB655 (Medical Conscience Rights Protections) (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 Conference supports LB655. This bill would protect doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and other people in the medical field from unjust discrimination and retaliation if they refuse to act in a way that would violate their consciences.

Health care professionals are not vending machines. Patients do not have a fundamental right to essentially swipe their health insurance card, press the buttons they desire, and expect the machine to dispense what they demand.

Health care professionals are human persons who have a responsibility to form their consciences well, so that they may reliably make not only professional judgments, but judgments that corresponds to moral, ethical, and religious convictions. As such, they have the corresponding right not to be forced to act contrary to conscience and violate their moral integrity.<sup>1</sup> It is through moral conscience, present at the heart of each human person, that actions are taken at the appropriate moment to do good and avoid evil.<sup>2</sup>

The rapid development of medical science in our age comes with exhilarating possibilities for the preservation of life, the treatment of disease, and the relief of many kinds of physical suffering—all of these are great human and moral goods. It also brings medical-ethical problems, some quite complex and often hotly debated in the political arena.

For example, in 2017, a highly regarded medical journal—the *New England Journal of Medicine*—published an article co-authored by Ezekiel Emanuel, one of the architects and advisers of the Affordable Care Act. Throughout debates before, during, and after the Affordable Care Act, there were significant conversations about protecting or not protecting medical conscience rights in certain contexts. In that article, Emanuel argued that “a health care professional cannot deny patients access to medications for mental health conditions, sexual

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 1780-82.

<sup>2</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1777.

dysfunction, or contraception based on their conscience.” Basically, Emanuel was arguing against medical professionals refusing—for reasons of conscience—to participate in abortions or providing abortifacient contraception. As he further states: “Health care professionals who are unwilling to accept these limits have two choices: select an area of medicine, such as radiology, that will not put them in situations that conflict with their personal morality or, if there is no such area, leave the profession.” Emanuel, of course, is not alone in this position.

One might ask: Have Emanuel’s statement about running off to radiology age well? Can one just run off into another specialty area, with the hopes and desires of hiding from moral and ethical problems?

A quick review of the medical literature on the practice of radiology as it relates to the transgender issue presents a developing body of thought arguing it should be standard of care that a radiologist use their professional talents and skills to accommodate a patient who wants to undergo a so-called gender transition. Emanuel’s assertion that radiology is some sort of safe harbor and sanctuary for the practice of medicine, somehow immune to the controversial moral issues of the day, has aged terribly.

So, if you can’t go into radiology, because that field is no longer protected from the political, moral, and cultural issues of the day, then—if Emanuel had it his way—people should leave the medical profession altogether. That’s a dangerous proposition for public health and the dignity of the human person, and a proposition LB655 protects against.

At the end of the day, doctors, nurses, physicians, and medical researchers are people we want dedicated to the highest moral and ethical standards. We entrust our lives and health, and the lives and health of those we care about. It is imperative that we not drive these professionals away from health care, and ensure that they can practice while bringing the moral, ethical, and religious convictions with them to the profession.

The Conference respectfully urges your support for LB655. Thank you for your time and consideration.