

TO: Health & Human Services Committee
FROM: Tom Venzor, Executive Director
Nebraska Catholic Conference
DATE: February 10, 2023
RE: LB810 (Medical Ethics & Diversity Act) (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 LB810. 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.

Moral conscience, present at the heart of the person, requires him or her at the appropriate moment to do good and avoid evil.¹ Persons have a responsibility to form their consciences well so that they may reliably make such distinctions; they have the corresponding right not to be forced to act contrary to conscience and violate the sense of their own moral integrity.²

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 great goods. It also brings medical-ethical problems, some quite complex and often hotly debated in the political arena. Doctors, nurses, physicians, and medical researchers are people we hope are dedicated to the highest moral and ethical standards, because it is to them that we entrust our lives, health, and the lives and health of those we care about. It is imperative that we not drive away from this profession those very people who take their ethical duties seriously and refuse to violate their own consciences and their best judgment about what is in the best interest of patients in the course of their work.

Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and researchers are people, not mere utilities to achieve outcomes. They deserve to have their rights of conscience protected. Their patients and the general public are also greatly benefited where people in these professions can be confident in their ability to serve free from the threat of moral coercion. The Conference respectfully urges your support for LB810.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1777.

² *Ibid.*, no. 1780-82.