



TO: Health and Human Services Committee
FROM: Tom Venzor, Executive Director
Nebraska Catholic Conference
DATE: Feb. 23, 2022
RE: LB710 (Eliminate SNAP Asset Test) (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.

I would like to express our support for LB710, which would eliminate the liquid asset test for eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

The imperative of meeting the needs of the hungry is a responsibility that falls not only to each and every one of us as individuals, but also on other forms of community and society, such as the family, religious organizations, private associations, and governmental entities. Each of these levels of society play a complementary, yet unique, role in addressing what Pope Francis has called the “scandal of hunger.”¹ Being confronted by this scandal should “challenge[] our personal and social conscience, in order to achieve a just and lasting solution” to hunger.²

Nebraska’s liquid asset test, which uniquely stands out across the country at \$25,000, remains an unnecessary barrier to food access for those who are otherwise experiencing poverty. Removing the asset test would encourage savings and economic independence by allowing those receiving food assistance the ability to accumulate savings. The imposition of the asset test forces families experiencing poverty to deplete savings to qualify for assistance. This arguably defeats the purpose of a prudent assistance program which should seek not only to provide for the basic needs of recipients but also ensure recipients can attain economic independence.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been historic in many ways, including the increased need for food assistance. Catholic Charities and Catholic Social Services, the charitable service agencies of the Archdiocese of Omaha and the Diocese of Lincoln, respectively, have provided record amounts of food assistance. For example, pre-pandemic, Catholic Charities distributed 200,000 pounds of food (valued at \$380,000) to 50,000 individuals. In 2021, they provided 2.8 million pounds of food (valued at \$5 million) for nearly 222,000 people. As the effects of the pandemic continue, available food sources have lately been dwindling, yet the need remains. Legislation like LB710 would help provide sufficient and adequate avenues for food access, especially at a time when access has been made even more difficult.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ Pope Francis, “Message of Pope Francis for World Food Day 2013,” available at http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/food/documents/papa-francesco_20131016_messaggio-giornata-alimentazione.html (last accessed on Feb. 22, 2022).

² Ibid.