



TO: Education Committee
FROM: Jeremy Ekeler, Assoc. Dir. of Education Policy
Nebraska Catholic Conference
DATE: February 1, 2021
RE: LB327 (Financial Literacy Curriculum Mandate) (Oppose)

Chairman Walz and Members of the Education Committee,

The Nebraska Catholic Conference advocates for the public policy interests of the Catholic Church and advances the Gospel of Life by engaging, educating, and empowering public officials, Catholic laity, and the general public. I write to express the Conference's opposition to LB327.

After productive communication with Senator Slama's office, we believe LB327 is a well-intentioned effort to educate Nebraska high school students in financial literacy. However, the educational leadership of our 110 Nebraska Catholic Schools across the dioceses of Omaha, Lincoln, and Grand Island maintains their consistent position that legislation does not dictate curricular matters in our schools.

The matter of financial literacy education is one our schools take seriously. Our high schools (all of which are NDE Rule 10 Accredited, with one exception) offer courses and/or partner with groups like Junior Achievement to give students the financial skills LB327 seeks to provide. For instance, Nebraska City Lourdes offers five courses in finance that range from personal financial literacy to Accounting (I & II).¹ Furthermore, our Catholic education model of local control fosters relationships with members of the community who also engage our schools – bankers, small business owners, restaurateurs, and other community members. These community collaborations are ones we wish to preserve.

Most importantly, the unique nature of Catholic school excellence is due to the Christocentric lens through which all is viewed. This "Catholic School Advantage" applies across all demographics and explains why Catholic schools shine in comparison to other types of schools.² Relevantly to LB327, this includes the instilling of Catholic social justice values related to economics.³

A plurality of educational opportunities is vital and respects the role of the parent as primary educator of their child. Curricular regulation of diverse nonpublic schools is contradictory to their purpose. In particular, Catholic Schools thrive when they maintain their identity as Christ-centered and rigorous educational environments free of excess regulation and mandate.⁴

The Nebraska Catholic Conference respectfully requests that you make this letter part of the public hearing record. Thank you for your time and consideration!

¹ https://www.lourdescentralcatholic.org/uploads/1/2/6/0/126077893/curriculum_guide_20-21.pdf

² https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55844033e4b0b4466f11c152/t/5a74be33e2c48335c9c593ea/1517600307699/18+NCEA_ParentNews_FEB_v1.pdf

³ <https://www.usccb.org/resources/catholic-framework-economic-life-0>

⁴ <https://www.amazon.com/Lost-Classroom-Community-Catholic-Importance/dp/022612200X>