



TO: Judiciary Committee  
FROM: Tom Venzor, Executive Director  
Nebraska Catholic Conference  
DATE: February 5, 2021  
RE: LB461 (Human Trafficking Info Posters in Casinos) (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 offer support for LB461 on behalf of the NCC.

From the outset of his pontificate, Pope Francis has been consistently vocal about the modern form of slavery, that is, human trafficking, which we all must combat. Pope Francis has condemned human trafficking with the strongest language, recognizing that trafficking is an “atrocious scourge,”<sup>1</sup> an “aberrant plague,”<sup>2</sup> and an “open wound on the body of contemporary society.”<sup>3</sup> As he has further stated: “The human person ought never to be sold or bought as if he or she were a commodity. Whoever uses human persons in this way and exploits them, even if indirectly, becomes an accomplice of injustice.”<sup>4</sup>

The Nebraska Legislature has taken heroic strides over the last decade to raise awareness about the evils of human trafficking. Just a decade ago, Shared Hope gave Nebraska an F grade for the lack of anti-human trafficking laws our state had in place.<sup>5</sup> Today, Polaris ranks Nebraska #1 in the country for our fight against human trafficking. This is not simply because of the major laws we have enacted to combat trafficking, but it is also because of the smaller, vigilant laws we have passed that educate and equip Nebraskans to identify and prevent trafficking.

Once again, the Unicameral can contribute to anti-trafficking efforts through a smaller, vigilant action that will undoubtedly save women and men from a life of being trafficked. LB461 would rightfully ensure that casinos be added to the list of places which are required to display human trafficking informational posters.

With the legalized advent of casino gambling into Nebraska, it is important to recognize the social costs of casinos relative to human trafficking. Casinos are known as hot spots for sex trafficking. One study found that casino patrons are 17% more likely to pay for sex and those

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Greeting to the OSCE Conference* (April 3, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, *Angelus* (July 30, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis, *Address to Participants in the International Conference on Combatting Human Trafficking* (April 10, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, *Message on the Occasion of the Annual Lenten ‘Fraternity Campaign’ in Brazil with the Theme of ‘Fraternity and Human Trafficking’* (March 15, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Nebraska Attorney General’s Office, “Combatting Human Trafficking in Nebraska” (2019).

identified as problem gamblers are 260% more likely to hire a prostitute.<sup>6</sup> As well, FBI investigators have included casinos as a key location “to recover minor sex trafficking victims and to target the criminal enterprises responsible for the commercial sex trafficking of children.”<sup>7</sup>

In recognizing casinos as hubs for trafficking activity and requiring human trafficking informational posters, Nebraska can remind the trafficking industry that we are watching, and we are fighting back against their criminal activity. More importantly, Nebraska can remind victims and survivors of trafficking that we see them, and that we are committed to abolishing their slavery and desire to restore their God-given human dignity.

The Nebraska Catholic Conference respectfully requests that the Judiciary Committee advance LB516 to General File—and we pray that this straightforward, common sense bill find a place on Consent Calendar.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

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<sup>6</sup> Douglas Walker, Christopher Clark, Jessie Folk, “The Relationship Between Gambling Behavior and Binge Drinking, Hard Drug Use, and Paying for Sex,” *UNLV Gaming Research and Review Journal*, Vol. 14 (1).

<sup>7</sup> “FBI Announces Results of National Child Sex Trafficking Operation in Oregon,” available at <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/portland/news/press-releases/fbi-announces-results-of-national-child-sex-trafficking-operation-in-oregon> (last accessed February 4, 2021).