



TO: Judiciary Committee  
FROM: Nebraska Catholic Conference  
Tom Venzor, Executive Director  
DATE: January 31, 2020  
RE: LB745 (T & U Immigrant Visa Certification) (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 NCC supports LB745.

Pope Francis has spoken unambiguously about human trafficking. He refers to it as “an atrocious scourge,” an “aberrant plague,” and an “open wound on the body of contemporary society.”<sup>1</sup>

Before his time as Pope John Paul II, the philosopher and theologian Karol Wojtyla articulated a fundamental moral principle known as the personalistic norm. This norm states that “[t]he person is the kind of good...[who] may not be treated as an object of use and, in this sense, a means to an end.”<sup>2</sup>

This personalistic norm stands in direct contrast to the utilitarian ethic that undergirds the world of human trafficking where human beings are treated and sold as commodities to maximize one’s pleasure, power, and profit. This utilitarian mentality toward our brothers and sisters “will always stand in the way of love.”<sup>3</sup>

These underlying moral principles, among others, are what lead the Church “to intervene in every phase of the trafficking of human beings” since “she wants to protect them from deception and solicitation; she wants to find them and free them when they are transported and reduced to slavery; [and] she wants to assist them once they are freed.”<sup>4</sup>

Human trafficking is a reality which affects the most vulnerable in society, including women, children, the poor, and those with disabilities. Not only does human trafficking deeply affect and wound these distinct groups of people, but also it particularly affects our immigrant population.

Much of what has been said not only applies to immigrants who seek a T visa, but also to immigrants who are victims of violent crimes and seek legal recourse in a U visa.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Greetings to the OSCE Conference* (April 3, 2017); *Angelus* (July 30, 2017); *Address to Participants in the International Conference on Combating Human Trafficking* (April 10, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility* (Pauline Books, 2013), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, *Address to Participants in the World Day of Prayer, Reflection and Action against Human Trafficking* (February 12, 2018).

While the Catholic Conference represents thousands upon thousands of Catholics across Nebraska, we also represent the Church’s institutional works of mercy. This includes the charitable and social services undertaken by our agencies, including Catholic Charities of Omaha and Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska.

Both of these agencies have full-time staff devoted to legal immigration representation. Both agencies regularly interact with and sometimes represent clients who seek T or U visas. Both agencies, without hesitation, affirmed that LB745 is a policy that would better serve their clients.

Both agencies recognized the lack of uniform treatment across jurisdictions of T and U immigrant visa applicants. They noted that some law enforcement agencies do an excellent job responding to certification requests, while other agencies vary in their response times even to the point of failing to respond after multiple requests.

Given the workloads of many law enforcement agencies, it is understandable that responses to certification requests are not always provided in the timeliest manner. Nevertheless, excessive delays and the total lack of response from some law enforcement agencies do not provide victims of human trafficking and violent crimes with the “welcome, human warmth, and the possibility of new life” they are owed.<sup>5</sup> They also stifle a basic principle of immigration, that is, that “[p]eople have the right to migrate and sustain their lives and the lives of their families.”<sup>6</sup>

LB745 strikes a reasonable balance to ensure consistency and uniformity across jurisdiction and “ensure[s] that our institutions are truly effective in the struggle against [the scourge of human trafficking]” and other violent crimes.<sup>7</sup>

It is fitting to recall Pope Francis’s comments on those famous lines in the *Book of Genesis*: “‘Where is your brother?’ (Gen 4:9). Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Let us not pretend and look the other way.”<sup>8</sup> Instead, let us offer public policy solutions that allow us to look upon the face of victims of trafficking and other violent crimes and meet their needs for restoration.

We ask for the Judiciary Committee’s advancement of LB745 to General File, which will achieve “the immediate objective [of] liberation and rehabilitation of all who are entangled in [human trafficking]” and “the ultimate goal [] to dismantle and eradicate this most evil and sinful enterprise of deception, entrapment, domination, and exploitation.”<sup>9</sup> Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>5</sup> Pope Francis, *Address to Participants in the International Conference on Combating Human Trafficking* (April 10, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Catholic Social Teaching on Immigration and Movement of Peoples,” found at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/catholic-teaching-on-immigration-and-the-movement-of-peoples.cfm> (last accessed on January 31, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis, *Address to the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations, New York* (September 25, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium* 24 (November 24, 2013), para. 211.

<sup>9</sup> Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development Migrants and Refugees Section, *Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking* (September 2019), p. 35, found at <https://migrants-refugees.va/documents/en/email/pastoral-orientations-on-human-trafficking.pdf> (last accessed on January 31, 2020).