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Statement in Support of LR 39

Senator Ashford and members of the Judiciary Committee:

Good afternoon. My name is Jim Cunningham. I am the executive director of the Nebraska Catholic Conference, which represents the mutual interests and concerns of the Archdiocese of Omaha and the dioceses of Lincoln and Grand Island, under the direction of the Diocesan Bishops serving in Nebraska.

Thank you for the opportunity to present for the record the Conference's support of LR 39.

We understand the value of the rule of law and believe in it. We understand that illegal immigration is not good for our nation. It is not good to not know who is entering our country. We believe that all immigrants should come to the United States lawfully. Moreover, we trust the well-regarded surveys that have found that the great majority of unauthorized immigrants would have preferred to enter this country lawfully if they could have given their economic and/or family circumstances. (They come to the United States for work to support their families.) But we also understand that the current legal framework for immigration is unrealistic, inadequate and largely dysfunctional; it does not adequately reunify families and is non-responsive to our country's need for labor, especially low-skilled labor.

For the same and varied reasons why the Nebraska Catholic Conference stands opposed to LB 48, the Conference stands in support of LR 39. Although perhaps not having the clout of an attempt to enforce federal policy with state crimes, this encouragement for our Congressional delegation is a reasonable and feasible step for this Legislature to take. Its intent and expression are reassuring.

The problems with our nation's immigration system are complex and, lamentably, politically charged. It is the prayer and hope of the Nebraska Catholic Conference that Congress will soon sincerely and conscientiously address this broken system with an overhaul that is just and workable, of which all can be proud and confident. This is a Federal issue that demands federal reform and LR 39 represents a way in which this Legislature can express its will and influence in encouraging reform to happen. We urge that it be advanced to the full Legislature for discussion and, hopefully, endorsement by all 49 members of the Unicameral.

Thank you for your time and attention.