



Omaha Together One Community (OTOC)

OTOC asks you to support LB 1032-Transitional Health Insurance Program

Present By: Pastor Keith T Nelson, Member, Augustana Lutheran Church, Omaha, NE

I am Keith Nelson, a Pastor of the Lutheran Church and a member of the clergy caucus of Omaha Together One Community. I am here to ask for your support to move LB 1032 out of committee and into law.

Many clergy and members of congregations across Nebraska urge you to see the Transitional Health Insurance Program Act as consistent with their faith. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops in their statement endorsing Medicaid Expansion said, "Catholic tradition upholds health care as a basic right flowing from the sanctity and dignity of human life."

Well-designed public policy is ethical, and promotes the common good, guided by principles such as fairness and "do no harm".

Nebraska treats some of its citizens unfairly and causes harm. Arbitrary income thresholds are used to refuse healthcare insurance for all. Almost 500 people die unnecessarily each year. Others become disabled or chronically ill when tax dollars already paid by Nebraskans are left on the table.

People without health insurance are harmed by delayed diagnosis and treatment.

All, totally unnecessary and very, very expensive.

People, such as hotel workers who clean and make the beds for guests to our state, many who serve us our fast food hamburgers, care for our children in day care centers, clean our houses, serve us coffee in the diner, stock shelves and bag groceries at the supermarket are among those who get caught "In the gap." For example in Senator Fox's district alone there are over 4000 people, mostly working poor, who are only one serious health problem away from economic ruin.

I did not appreciate the need of LB1032 until I preached in a south Omaha congregation. Following the service a parishioner asked me a startling question: How do I get insurance? Immediately I thought – well you buy it! He asked, "Do you think I should buy that and cut back on food?" He said, I need to have treatment that the community health center can't do but I can't figure out how to pay for it."

Perhaps you have had a similar experience. Maybe you see LB1032 as good public policy for our state. Or maybe you have never had a conversation with your server or the person who cares for your elderly relative about their circumstances. Some of us live comfortably, receive health insurance from our employers or Medicare and can pay for our medical needs. We are insulated from the problem and the harm our decisions do to others.

It is time to open our eyes and see, our ears to hear the cries of honest, often hard working Nebraskans who, for reasons beyond their control, are "In the gap."

Etched on the pylons at the north entrance to this building is our state motto: "Equality before the Law." Presently, we have an unnecessary and expensive form of diversity in our state. That is the diversity among our citizens in terms of their access to health care. Today, using a market-based, job growth, economic development approach, Nebraska has the opportunity to redress this inequality. Passing LB 1032 out of committee and into law is the right thing to do.

Thank You.