

April 6, 2007

Senator Brad Ashford
PO Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509

Re: Support for LB 541

Dear Senator Ashford:

Nebraska Advocacy Services, Inc., as the designated protection and advocacy organization for persons with disabilities in Nebraska, is writing to offer our support for LB 541. People with behavioral health disorders often find themselves involved with the correctional systems, often through simply a manifestation of their illness and for non-violent offenses. There is a growing need for Nebraska to address the increasing number of persons with behavioral health needs who are residing within the state's correctional systems. During the past five years, we have supported a range of legislation to address the needs of Nebraskans with mental illness in the correctional system.

We strongly support the effort to streamline and make the statewide system of community corrections as seamless as possible. However, we would recommend adding language to Section 16, page 4, line 6 to read:

“...ensure a statewide system of community corrections that includes appropriate mental health and substance abuse services;”

Additionally, we would recommend adding “and mental health” to sections 9, 10, and 12 to read:

“(9) In order to ensure adequate funding for substance abuse and mental health treatment programs for probationers...”

“(10) In order to ensure adequate funding for substance abuse and mental health treatment programs for parolees...”

“(12) Study substance abuse and mental health treatment services in and related to the criminal justice system...”

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If you have any further questions, please contact Brad Meurrens at our office, 402-474-3183, or brad@nas-pa.org.

Sincerely,

Eric A. Evans
Deputy Executive Director

EAE/BAM/jrm

cc: Sen. Lathrop; Sen. Chambers; Sen. McDonald; Sen. McGill; Sen. Pedersen; Sen. Pirsch; Sen. Schimek