

Judiciary Committee
Implementation of Juvenile Services Delivery Project Under LB985
December 5, 2012

Thomas Pristow, Director
Division of Children and Family Services
Department of Health and Human Services

Good afternoon, Senator Ashford and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Thomas Pristow (T-H-O-M-A-S P-R-I-S-T-O-W). I am the Director of the Division of Children and Family Services at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Thank you Senator Ashford and the Judiciary Committee for giving me the opportunity to testify regarding the Juvenile Services Delivery Project as implemented under LB985.

The Department of Health and Human Services and the Administrative Office of Probation entered into an interagency agreement from January 1, 2009 through June 30, 2012. The final amendment to the agreement, which was signed in March 2012, was for a dollar amount not to exceed \$7,725,000, which included \$1,158,750 for administrative costs. The original intent of this agreement was to: be a pilot project in Douglas County only; eliminate supervision of the same juveniles by both the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Probation; reduce the number of juveniles in the legal custody of the Department of Health and Human Services; prevent unnecessary penetration of juveniles further into the juvenile justice system; provide access to more services and resources in the community for juveniles placed on probation; and meet the needs of juveniles in the least restrictive community environment while maintaining community safety.

The interagency agreement terminated with the passage of LB985. It was our understanding that LB985 created a pilot project like the one set out in the original interagency agreement which would continue in the Judicial District serving Douglas County and expand to the DHHS Western Service Area in Judicial Districts 11 and 12. LB 985A transferred \$8.4 million from the DHHS budget to the Office of Probation effective July 1, 2012. With this funding, courts in those three judicial districts would place juveniles adjudicated as ungovernable under Section 43-247(3) (b) on probation rather than placing them with the Department of Health and Human Services. Juveniles adjudicated as law violators under Section 43-247(1) or (2) would not be committed to the Office of Juvenile Services unless they were being committed to the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers.

In preparation for the implementation of LB985 in the 4th, 11th and 12th Judicial District, DHHS staff attended community stakeholder education sessions held by the Office of Probation. Stakeholders who were invited to attend included, but were not limited to, service providers, attorneys, Judges, County Attorneys and school officials. At these sessions, stakeholders were informed that the Office of Probation would now have the funding necessary to serve juveniles adjudicated under Sections 43-247(1), (2) and (3b) except those youth who required a commitment to the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers. Meetings between the Office of Probation and DHHS were also held to clarify

each of our roles, our mutual expectations and which juveniles the Office of Probation would serve. Meetings have also occurred between the Office of Probation, DHHS and UNMC regarding gathering data to evaluate the cost effectiveness of LB985. We are currently in the process of obtaining a Business Associate Agreement with UNMC in order to exchange information for the evaluation process.

After the operative date of LB985, courts in these three judicial districts continued to place juveniles with DHHS or DHHS/OJS both pre-adjudication and post-adjudication. From July 1, 2012, through November of 2012, a number of youth were placed with DHHS.

I am fully committed to the success of the LB 985 and the pilot. My staff and I are in regular contact with Corey and his staff. We will continue to meet with judges to help explain the options available to them to meet the needs of the children. I want to see results for these youth to set them on the right path to a healthy and productive life.

In closing, thank you again Senator Ashford and the Judiciary Committee for giving me the time to speak with you today. If you have any questions I would be happy to answer them.