

Health and Human Service Committee
LB 1016 – Testimony
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Scot Adams, PhD
Interim Director, Division of Children and Family Services

Good afternoon, Senator Campbell and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Scot Adams, (S-C-O-T A-D-A-M-S), Interim Children and Family Services Director with the Department of Health and Human Services. I am here to testify in opposition of LB 1016.

In September 2008, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) launched the ACCESSNebraska project. The transition to a Universal Caseload and creation of four Customer Service Centers began in October 2010 and will conclude in January. The vision for ACCESSNebraska is to expand client services by using current technology and policy efficiencies to modernize the Economic Assistance Service Delivery System.

The ACCESSNebraska objectives are:

- Increase accessibility to Economic Assistance Programs.
- Increase DHHS responsiveness to our customers and maintain accuracy of case eligibility determinations.
- Increased efficiency of the Service Delivery system by utilizing a Universal Case Management System and through advances in technology.

Through three primary uses of technology – web, telephone, and walk-in offices; clients can apply for and access their benefits. They are doing this on their own, with the assistance of staff at any of our locations or with the assistance of one of our community partners.

- Document Imaging allows staff to see a client's case information from any location. Clients are also able to submit the verification information requested to process their cases electronically. As of December 31, 2011, over 10 million pages have been scanned.
- Web Services allows clients to apply on-line, report changes on-line and view their benefits on-line. Since September 2008, over 327,000 applications have been submitted online.
- Currently, over 62% of the total applications received are received through this method and 75% of those applications were completed on computers located at home, a relative's or friend's home or work.
- Customer Service Centers allow for clients to call one toll free number and reach a Social Service Worker who can view their case, handle reported case changes, complete an interview and answer questions. In December 2011, over 203,000 calls were made to ACCESSNebraska's telephone number; 109,000 of these were received by the Customer Service Centers; with the remainder of the calls receiving customer self service through the automated Interactive Voice Response (IVR) option or were routed to a different

phone source such as fraud, Medicaid, or resource development. The average wait time in December was just over eight (8) minutes.

We do recognize the need for specialization of some services and we have made some changes to better serve the individuals who may fit into that category. An example includes refugees. We also have 30 local offices – 28 of which are open to the public full time to assist Economic Assistance clients. In addition we have several satellite offices to meet personally with people. I want to reiterate that we have always and continue to meet with individuals in person upon request.

In addition, an important part of the success of ACCESSNebraska is our 496 Community Partners. Since some partners are at more than one location, they provide about 600 actual sites in 119 communities. The Department maintains information on our website regarding our Community Partners. These Community Partners were surveyed to ask what level of service they would be willing to provide to people applying for economic assistance. The levels of service include but are not limited to providing a computer, assisting with online applications, and providing paper applications.

The Department has eight (8) Community Support Specialists located across the State to stay in contact with the Partners in their area providing information and support in serving clients. In addition, six (6) online trainings are available to assist clients and agencies with ACCESSNebraska's web site and toll free telephone number.

Since January 2010, monthly phone calls have occurred with a Community Partner workgroup made up of different staff from the Department and representatives from our Partners. All Partners are invited to join the call. These calls continue to occur. The information received during these phone calls has provided valuable feedback and resulted in several improvements.

LB 1016 would require the Department to enter into contracts with thirty community-based organizations and require Department staff to be present at these organizations. The Department estimates that at least thirty additional Social Service Workers and three Social Service Supervisors would be necessary to meet the requirements set forth in the Bill. This additional staff would allow for at least one Department staff member to be available at the Community Partner to accept applications, complete interviews and answer questions. Without additional funding to hire the staff needed to support these community-based organizations, the Department would need to use current staff from the local offices and Customer Service Centers.

Although, our partnership with these Community Partners is an integral part of ACCESSNebraska in assisting our clients, you will also see in the document I provided to you that the majority of our clients submit their on-line applications from their own homes, a friend's home, or from work.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide the Committee with information related to LB1016 and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.