

LB 825 - Testimony
Health and Human Services Committee
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Good afternoon, Senator Campbell and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Scot Adams, Interim Children and Family Services Director with the Department of Health and Human Services. I am here to testify in opposition of LB 825.

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 February 2012. The vision for ACCESSNebraska is to expand client services by using current technology and policy efficiencies to modernize the Economic Assistance Service Delivery System.

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 the use of three primary technologies, clients can apply and/or access their benefits. They are doing this on their own or with family or friends, with the assistance of staff at any of our locations or with the assistance of a community partner.

- 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 on-line.
- Currently, over 62% of all applications are received through this method.
- 75% of those applications were completed on computers located at home, a relative's or friend's home or work.
- In December 2011, 35.5% of these applications were received during non-business hours. This tells us that clients are utilizing the online application when it is convenient for them.

- 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.

We do recognize the need for some specialization of services and we have made some changes to better serve the individuals who may fit into that category. We continue to evaluate ACCESSNebraska and how to continue to improve.

Regarding this particular bill, we had a difficult time determining whether the bill requires an additional 25 new office or if the current local offices would meet the requirements of the bill. We currently have 30 local offices. One of those offices is a kiosk-only office and one other office will be closing prior to April 1, 2012. This leaves 28 local offices that are open to the public full time to assist Economic Assistance clients. In addition, we have multiple satellite offices and offices with a kiosk only.

We estimate that fifty- (50) Social Service Workers (SSW) ,twenty-five (25) Case Aides and eight (8) Social Service Supervisors would be necessary to reasonably target completion of applications within the 24-hour turnaround time as required in LB 825 for the additional twenty-five (25) offices. These additional staff would allow for someone to be available at all open times to assist clients and also meet with clients at other locations such as DHHS satellite offices or other meeting locations that are convenient for the client.

In addition to local offices, the Department has over 600 Community Partners who have agreed to provide some level of assistance to those applying for Department benefits. This assistance ranges from helping with the completion of online applications to providing paper applications as well as many other tasks. The Department has eight (8) Community Support Specialist who assist the Community Partners in serving clients. Currently, six (6) online trainings are available to assist clients and agencies with ACCESSNebraska's website and toll-free telephone number.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide the Committee with information related to LB 825 and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.