

Health and Human Services Committee

LB 1079

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Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

Good afternoon, Senator Riepe, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Jenifer Roberts Acierno (J-E-N-I-F-E-R R-O-B-E-R-T-S-A-C-I-E-R-N-O) and I am a Deputy Director in the Division of Public Health in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). I am here to testify in opposition to LB 1079, which proposes to change the Children's Residential Facilities and Placing Licensure Act.

The DHHS Division of Public Health has, and continues, to review internal processes to ensure investigations on licensed Residential Child Caring and Child Placing Agencies are conducted and completed in a timely manner. There are 58 licensed facilities across the state with one staff person assigned to complete all inspections and investigations for those licensed programs. In 2017, the Department received over 70 intakes from the Division of Children and Family Services Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline that involved Residential Child Caring and Child Placing Agencies. Many of those investigations involved law enforcement.

The five day requirement for the review of the complaint indicated in the bill would be a timeframe Public Health would be able to meet. Currently, complaints received by the Division are typically reviewed within two or three business days. However, if the legislation is passed as written, the requirement to issue a report on the investigation within 30 days would create potential issues for the Department. Many of these investigations involve law enforcement that often request the Department to wait on the completion of its interviews before contacting the licensee. Those complex investigations are rarely completed within 30 days so in those instances, the Department would not be able to issue the final report.

I would be happy to address any questions you or the committee may have regarding our complaint investigation process and the changes we have made when investigating licensed programs.

Thank you for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.