

February 19, 2015

Senator Kathy Campbell, Chair
Health and Human Services Committee
P.O. Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509-4604

RE: LB 243

Dear Senator Campbell and members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

I am writing to provide feedback regarding LB 243, which would establish a pilot project requiring DHHS to contract with Service Providers for Family Finding Services in all five service areas.

Family Finding has been a targeted project in our Southeast Service Area for two years. We have been encouraged with its results, and are supportive of the project being put into use statewide. I wanted to point out technical issues the committee may want to consider when discussing LB243.

- In Section 2, subsection (5), LB 243 limits child placing agencies as the only organizations that DHHS may consider as a contracted provider of family finding services. This would exclude several other organizations that could be considered as potential candidates, such as any mediation centers or other child welfare agencies that provide services including family support or intensive family preservation, but are not child placing agencies.
- In Section 3, LB 243 refers to Family Finding as an evidenced-based process. While outcomes of Family Finding have been promising, you may want to consider replacing the words "evidenced-based" with "promising practice." The California Clearinghouse of Evidence-Based Practices, does not yet identify this method as such.
- In Section 6, the \$3 million allocated from the General Fund to the Department, only funds the service contracts. It does not permit the Department to use the money for the evaluation contract (as required in Section 8) or the additional staff needed for activities, such as Interstate Compact of the Placement of Children (ICPC), data collection, and administrative oversight.
- Section 7 requires DHHS to collect specific data from the contractors. As noted above, funds are not appropriated for additional staff or the development of a data collection

system. Data collection is to include “case outcomes, including permanency, guardianship, and family support.” The meanings of “case outcomes,” “permanency” and “family support” are unclear. Additionally, adoption is not referenced in this section as a permanent outcome.

- LB 243 does not address confidentiality and releasing birth parent information. Nebraska law mandates adoption records be sealed. DHHS regulation prevents the release of birth parent information for any parent who has relinquished parental rights. Family Finding involves outreach to the birth parents’ families, and without a specific statutory provision authorizing the release of birth parent information for Family Finding, DHHS cannot release information.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this information. I am happy to work with Senator Bolz and this Committee to further develop LB 243.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to share the above concerns and recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Green". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tony" being more prominent than the last name "Green".

Tony Green, Acting Director
Division of Children and Family Services
Department of Health and Human Services

Cc: Senator Bolz