

NEBRASKA

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DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Pete Ricketts, Governor

February 15, 2017

Senator John Murante
District #49 State Capitol
P.O. Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509-4604

RE: LB 340

Dear Senator Murante and Members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee:

I am writing to express my support for LB 340 also known as the "Nebraska Veterans Services Act." This bill calls for the merger of the Veterans' Homes Division of the Department of Health and Human Services with the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs (NDVA).

Along with the Division of Veterans' Homes personnel, facilities and resources, there will be a transfer of 37 FTE from Department of Health and Human Services Operations (Program 33). This will enable NDVA to have the administrative capacity for a successful transition and an effective merger.

All aspects of the bill, the mechanics of the merger and the resulting impact on both agencies have been reviewed. We are comfortable and confident that the merger will be successful.

One issue that has arisen after the bill's introduction pertains to Section 17. The merger will drop the DHHS below the 5,000 employee threshold that provides for 50 discretionary employees; therefore, the agency would only be able to maintain 14 discretionary positions. Currently, DHHS has 39 discretionary positions. Therefore, in order to hold DHHS harmless, I respectfully request that page 11, line 8 be amended to strike "14" and add "40."

Although the merger will organizationally transfer the Veterans' Homes Division to the Department of Veterans' Affairs, we will continue to support Nebraska's Veterans through other DHHS programs. We will continue to work in collaboration with NDVA and all agencies to help all Nebraskans live better lives.

We are happy to support LB 340 which promises to be a transformational milestone in the long and proud history of veteran services in Nebraska.

Sincerely,

Courtney N. Phillips, MPA
Chief Executive Officer
Department of Health and Human Services