

Judiciary Committee

LB 908

January 29, 2014

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Division of Children and Family Services
Department of Health and Human Services**

Good afternoon, Senator Ashford and members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Thomas Pristow (T-H-O-M-A-S P-R-I-S-T-O-W) Director of the Division of Children and Family Services of the Department of Health and Human Services. I am here to testify in a neutral position on LB 908. I would like to thank Senators Coash and McGill for introducing this bill.

Following the passage of LB216, the Young Adult Voluntary Services and Support Act, in 2013, DCFS began preparations to implement the extended services programs now known as Bridge to Independence. Throughout this process DCFS has been fortunate to have the support and collaboration of the Young Adult Voluntary Services and Support Advisory Committee as well as a number of dedicated individuals and organizations in the child welfare system. Over the past year, many, including DCFS, have voiced concern regarding the extended guardianship assistance program established by LB 216. In Nebraska, guardianships of minors terminate when the ward reaches the age of majority. Although LB 216 provides funds for guardianship assistance payments to extend beyond the age of 21, it did not extend the legal status of the guardianship beyond age 21. This means that no legal relationship exists between the guardian and the young adult past the ward's 19th birthday, and the former guardian therefore has no legal duties or obligations to the young adult. LB 908 attempts to rectify this issue; however, it appears to fall short of adequately fully resolving the lack of a legal relationship.

DCFS stands ready to work with Senators Coash and McGill to ensure that this program is able to provide support to the young adults who are eligible. I have provided a letter which addresses technical matters with the bill and I would appreciate the opportunity to work with this Committee to improve the Young Adult Voluntary Services and Support Act

in a way that does not create barriers but improves support for young adults.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding LB 908.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.