

January 20, 2015

Sen. Jim Scheer, Chair
Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee
District #19
Room 1401
Lincoln, NE 68509

RE: LB 115

Dear Sen. Scheer and members of the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee:

I am writing to provide information about the use of Social Security Numbers within the Department of Health and Human Services.

Social Security Numbers are federally mandated for many programs across our six divisions and are therefore used as client identifiers, including within DHHS electronic data systems. Because they are a uniquely held number, this allows for accuracy in the delivery of benefits and services.

DHHS also administers programs for which we do not have a state or federal mandate for use of Social Security Numbers but have chosen to use them as client identifiers. This allows us to know the difference, for example, between people with the same name to ensure the benefits are received by the right person, as common names occur with surprising frequency. It also allows our programs to interface so we are able to know all programs or services received by an individual and provide data accordingly.

DHHS has rulemaking authority for most of those programs and, if LB 115 passes, we will begin the process to promulgate rules and regulations to conform to the bill. Examples of these programs include, but are not limited to: adult protective services, adoption services and subsidy, guardianship services and subsidy, domestic violence services, alternative response services, foster care licensing, and the central registry for abuse and neglect.

We are currently reviewing the status of the Regional Centers, as the regulations that affect the Regional Centers may be related only to the ability to pay, which is not used for everyone who enters a Regional Center.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe M. Acierno", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joseph M. Acierno, MD, JD
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Department of Health and Human Services