

**Judiciary Committee**

**LB 471**

**March 6, 2013**

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

Good afternoon, Senator Coash and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Thomas Pristow (T-H-O-M-A-S P-R-I-S-T-O-W). I am the Director of the Division of Children and Family Services at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. I am here to testify in support of LB 471 which changes current law on pre-dispositional evaluations that must be completed on juveniles prior to commitment to the Office of Juvenile Services.

When a juvenile is adjudicated as a juvenile offender, the court may temporarily place the juvenile with the DHHS – Office of Juvenile Services for an evaluation prior to the disposition hearing. The pre-dispositional evaluations coordinated by the Office of Juvenile Services include in-depth psychological, educational, mental health, and drug and alcohol abuse assessments to identify each juvenile's program and treatment needs. The evaluations are completed by contracted clinical providers within a 30 day time frame. If there are no major changes in the juvenile's behavior or treatment needs, the information provided in an evaluation should be applicable for up to 12 months. The ability of the court to utilize evaluations completed within a 12-month time frame reduces duplication of assessment information as well as the time needed to complete another evaluation.

The Department of Health and Human Services has followed this practice and supports the courts in utilizing, as much as possible, evaluations or their addendums for up to 12 months. Frequently, new evaluations contain equivalent information. The added language under LB 471 clarifies the time frame that the courts' may use evaluations or addendums to determine an appropriate disposition for juveniles adjudicated as juvenile offenders.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding LB 471. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.