

Judiciary Committee
LB 928
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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 928. I would like to thank the State-Tribal Relations Committee for introducing this bill.

The Division of Children and Families is fortunate to have the opportunity to serve thousands of Nebraska children, adults and families every day. This includes the opportunity to serve the children, adults and families of the Native American population. Many times working with this population requires compliance with the Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Act and the Federal Indian Child Welfare Act. This must be accomplished in partnership with the Native American Tribes.

DCFS is making concentrated efforts to strengthen the working relationship with tribal representatives as well as to amplify technical assistance opportunities. On-going consultation with the tribes has produced many positive outcomes. Recent collaborative efforts have produced many good things. For example, DCFS has worked with the four tribes whose headquarters are within Nebraska's borders, Iowa Department of Human Services representatives, and staff of Briar Cliff University and University of Iowa to secure the awarding of the Diligent Recruitment of Foster Homes Grant. The purpose of this grant is to recruit Native American foster homes as a resource for children and families and decrease disruptions in placements of Native American children.

DCFS diligently continues to improve compliance with the Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Act and the Federal Indian Child Welfare Act.

DCFS continues to seek out and stand ready to work with our tribal partners and the State-Tribal Relations Committee, to ensure the Native American Children and

Families of Nebraska receive the services needed for safety and well-being. I have provided a letter which addresses technical matters with the bill and I would appreciate the opportunity to work with this Committee and the State-Tribal Relations Committee to improve the Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Act in a way that does not create barriers but improves outcomes for children.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding LB 928.

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