

Disability Rights Nebraska

Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities

**Testimony on LB 770
Before the Government Military and Veterans Committee
Nebraska Legislature**

March 8, 2023

**Bradley A. Meurrens
Public Policy Director
Disability Rights Nebraska**

Disability Rights Nebraska is the designated Protection and Advocacy organization for persons with disabilities in Nebraska. We strongly support LB 770.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has studied accessibility issues for voters and found that 60% of surveyed voting sites had physical barriers including ramps that were too steep, poor parking or path surfaces, and lack of signs.

Last year, our organization conducted an in-person survey of the Election Commission and DMV offices in over twenty counties. We checked to see whether a voter with disabilities could easily access those public spaces to register to vote, to cast an early vote, or to obtain a photo ID. Similar to the GAO study, we found a significant number of barriers. Unfortunately, our survey of these public offices revealed that inaccessibility is an issue affecting Nebraska counties all across the state. For example:

- Some counties had installed an elevator to allow voters to access DMV and election offices on an upper floor, but the elevator was out of order or required a key to use.
- Some counties had no signage explaining where accessible entrances were for Nebraskans with disabilities or where disability parking spots were.
- Some counties had disability parking spaces for vans, but they were all the way around the building from the only accessible entrance.
- Some counties had broken concrete all along the route to enter the building. Broken concrete is a minefield for someone using a wheelchair, walker, or crutches.
- Many counties had doorways that were too narrow. A narrow doorway may prevent a wheelchair user from being able to enter and is out of compliance with requirements of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Many counties had automated doors that were out of order. Some doors were too heavy to open manually by a person with a disability.
- Many counties had a high lip on the door threshold, creating a dangerous trip hazard for someone using a walker or crutches and a physical barrier for a person using a wheelchair.

Consequently, we applaud Senator Cavanaugh's proposal to audit the public offices related to voting. LB 770 will provide a clear roadmap for state and local election authorities to remove

Disability Rights Nebraska

Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities

accessibility barriers and thus ensure that people with disabilities can cast their votes. As one voter told us, “I participate in democracy just like everyone else—except when there are hurdles put in my way.”

Disability Rights Nebraska recommends the committee advance LB 770.