

Disability Rights Nebraska

Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities

March 19, 2020

Dear Senators:

Disability Rights Nebraska is the designated Protection and Advocacy organization for people with disabilities in Nebraska, writes to oppose consideration of LB 875.

We understand that the “assisted outpatient therapy” at the heart of this legislation is a euphemism for involuntary commitment (but in an *outpatient* setting).

Outpatient commitment is especially problematic when the decision is based on a prediction that an individual may become violent at an indefinite time in the future; the person supposedly lacks “insight” on their mental health status (which is often operationalized as disagreement with a treating professional); or the potential for deterioration in the individual's condition or mental status without treatment. The above criteria cannot be accurately assessed on an individual basis and are rooted in speculation.

Outpatient commitment is a formalization of coercion within the community mental health system. Which acts to undermine individuals’ confidence in, and causes many individuals to avoid contact with, the mental health system altogether. Outpatient commitment undermines the therapeutic relationship between the provider and consumer of mental health services which is counterproductive to “treatment”.

Disability Rights Nebraska opposes LB 875.

If there are further questions or comment, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience: brad@drne.org or 402-474-3183.

Sincerely,

Bradley A. Meurrens, MPA
Public Policy Director
Disability Rights Nebraska