

# Disability Rights Nebraska

Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities

## Testimony on LB 596

Before the Executive Board  
Nebraska Legislature  
February 20, 2019

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

Senator Hilgers and members of the Executive Board:

For the record, my name is Brad B-R-A-D Meurrens M-E-U-R-R-E-N-S and I am the Public Policy Director for Disability Rights Nebraska, the designated Protection and Advocacy organization for people with disabilities in Nebraska. Disability Rights Nebraska strongly supports LB 596.

The serious concerns raised about the health and safety of residents living at the Life Quest facilities at the Coolidge Center in Palmer, Nebraska and at Bel Amis in Blue Hill, Nebraska (and ultimately the tragic death of a female veteran resident at the Life Quest-Palmer facility) demonstrate that a mechanism by which state-owned and –licensed health care facilities was, and is still, needed<sup>1</sup>. As an organization committed to ensuring people with disabilities are free from death, abuse, neglect, and violations of their rights (especially those people with disabilities who are vulnerable), Disability Rights Nebraska welcomes creating the Inspector General for Public Health to ensure that state-owned or state-licensed health care facilities are held accountable for the safety, security, and treatment of individuals in their care. Since there are mechanisms to ensure the care, safety, and security of other individuals in other state-owned or –licensed facilities (e.g., corrections) it is only fitting that there be a designated official to ensure that these entities are held accountable to their care obligation. We support creating the Inspector General of Public Health to investigate, identify, and prevent problems; and when things do go wrong, there is in place an individual who can quickly address them.

Disability Rights Nebraska recommends advancing LB 596. Please contact me at your earliest convenience if you have any further questions or would like more information.

Sincerely,

Brad Meurrens  
Public Policy Director  
Disability Rights Nebraska

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<sup>1</sup> See Disability Rights Nebraska website, [https://www.disabilityrightsnebraska.org/what\\_we\\_do/palmer-ne-lifequest-incidents.html](https://www.disabilityrightsnebraska.org/what_we_do/palmer-ne-lifequest-incidents.html) “Both facilities were licensed as mental health centers. Inspections of the facilities were done by Division of Public Health and both facilities failed to meet the standards of the Department of Health and Human Services. The Blue Hill facility failed to comply with regulations on multiple occasions dating back to 2012”

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