

Disability Rights Nebraska

Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities

April 2, 2018

Dear Senators:

Disability Rights Nebraska, the designated Protection and Advocacy organization for people with disabilities in Nebraska, writes in support of LB 1126.

As highlighted by the recent National Public Radio series “Abused and Betrayed”¹, people with disabilities are “the victims of sexual assaults at rates more than seven times those for people without disabilities. It’s one of the highest rates of sexual assault of any group in America, and it’s hardly talked about at all.”²

Moreover, people with intellectual disabilities are “at heightened risk during all parts of their day. They are more likely than others to be assaulted by someone they know. The assaults, often repeat assaults, happen in places where they are supposed to be protected and safe, often by a person they have been taught to trust and rely upon.”³

The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that people with disabilities of various types⁴, not just intellectual disability, are at significantly higher rates of violent crime than persons without disabilities: “The rate of serious violent crime (rape or sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) for persons with disabilities (12.7 per 1,000) was more than three times the rate for persons without disabilities (4.0 per 1,000)”.⁵

¹ The whole series can be accessed at <https://www.npr.org/series/575502633/abused-and-betrayed>

² James Shapiro (2018), “The Sexual Assault Epidemic No One Talks About”, January 8, at <https://www.npr.org/2018/01/08/570224090/the-sexual-assault-epidemic-no-one-talks-about>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Erika Harrell (2017), “Crime Against Persons with Disabilities, 2009-2015 - Statistical Tables”, July, *Bureau of Justice Statistics Statistical Tables*, available at <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd0915st.pdf>, pg. 1. “Disabilities are classified according to six limitations: hearing (deafness or serious difficulty hearing), vision (blindness or serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses), cognitive (serious difficulty in concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition), ambulatory (difficulty walking or climbing stairs), self-care (a condition that causes difficulty dressing or bathing), and independent living (physical, mental, or emotional condition that impedes doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor or shopping).”

⁵ See Harrell (2017) at pg. 4

We appreciate LB 1126's attention to the accessibility of documents for persons with visual impairment.

We strongly urge the legislature to advance this legislation.

For further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience: brad@drne.org, or 402-474-3183.

Sincerely,

Brad Meurrens

Public Policy Director
Disability Rights Nebraska