

Disability Rights Nebraska

Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities

March 15, 2018

Dear Senators:

Disability Rights Nebraska, the designated Protection and Advocacy organization for people with disabilities in Nebraska, writes in support of LB 1041.

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

In the context of children, these heightened risk factors are also prevalent. The Vera Institute of Justice reports, “Children with disabilities are three times more likely than children without them to be victims of sexual abuse, and the likelihood is even higher for children with certain types of disabilities, such as intellectual or mental health disabilities.”⁴

We strongly support efforts to identify instances of sexual abuse of children. Without efforts such as LB 1041, the silence surrounding sexual abuse of vulnerable children, especially those with disabilities, instances of sexual abuse of children will likely not be identified as fully as possible and acted upon sufficiently.

We strongly urge the legislature to pass this legislation.

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 Nancy Smith & Sandra Harrell (2013), “Sexual Abuse of Children with Disabilities: A National Snapshot”, March, available at www.vera.org/pubs/sexual-abuse-children-with-disabilities

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