



April 2, 2015

RE: LB 518

Senator Campbell:

Disability Rights Nebraska is the designated protection and advocacy (P&A) organization for Nebraskans with disabilities. The P&A system is a nationwide network of congressionally created, legally based disability rights agencies. P&A organizations provide legal representation and other advocacy services to people with disabilities and, together, comprise the nation's largest provider of legally based advocacy services for people with disabilities.

Disability Rights Nebraska is opposed to LB 518 as currently written.

As the statement of intent indicates, LB 518 is intended to “review the medical assistance program provided under the Medical Assistance Act by proving [sic] incentives through free market qualified health care services to benefit recipients under the program”. We read that as a wholesale change to the current Medicaid program and structure. LB 518 may be well-intended, to begin a discussion about alternatives and improvements to Medicaid, but it puts many individuals with disabilities, who often have no other healthcare alternative than Medicaid, at risk.

First, the number of services that would be approved under this bill is severely limited and would not meet the necessary medical and healthcare needs of many Nebraskans with disabilities. This bill would need further clarification and expansion of what services would be eligible. Second, for those individuals with disabilities who need more services than are afforded by the state deposit into an individual’s Health Savings Account, we are concerned about their ability to meet their healthcare needs with the funding ceilings put in place by LB 518. We are also concerned that the time it would take for a review/appeal of the funding might jeopardize that individual’s health—let alone if the result of the appeal is a denial for an increase.

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LB 518 proposes a sea change in the provision of Medicaid for Nebraska and raises more issues and questions than it answers. If not indefinitely postponed, LB 518 could be held over to allow disability organizations to work with Sen. Riepe and others to address mutual concerns and discuss ways in which Nebraska can move forward with a responsive and responsible healthcare safety net system. Disability Rights Nebraska would be happy to participate in such a discussion.

If you have any further questions or comment, please contact me at your convenience: brad@drne.org, or 402-474-3183.

Sincerely,

Bradley A. Meurrens
Public Policy Specialist

BAM/jrm

cc: Sen. Baker; Sen. Cook; Sen. Crawford; Sen. Howard; Sen. Kolterman; Sen. Riepe