

Disability Rights Nebraska

Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities

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ADVOCATES CALL FOR GOVERNOR TO PROTECT AT-RISK NEBRASKANS DURING COVID-19

Disability advocacy organizations urge Governor Ricketts to issue guidance to prevent discriminatory health care rationing

Lincoln, NE -- Disability Rights Nebraska and 15 stakeholder organizations issued a call today for Governor Pete Ricketts to protect the rights of Nebraskans with disabilities during the COVID-19 emergency and forbid discriminatory medical rationing.

[Some states](#) have recently proposed crisis health standards to ration medical care that are overtly discriminatory to people living with developmental, intellectual, psychiatric, and physical disabilities. "People with disabilities being placed at the back of the line—or being forbidden from even getting in the line for care—is not a phantom specter. We're seeing written protocols for care that would simply discard people living with an intellectual disability, people who regularly use a ventilator, people with neuromuscular disease, people with immunocompromised systems, and people with some forms of cancer. This isn't just inhumane—it's illegal," said Eric Evans, CEO of Disability Rights Nebraska.

While many states have written crisis standards of care that instruct medical providers how to address an emergency where there are inadequate resources, Nebraska currently has no such plan. "In the absence of leadership from Governor Ricketts, each individual hospital and doctor will be making a judgment call that might result in a patchwork quilt of rights statewide. We need clear guidance from the state now," Evans added. "We provided legal authority to Governor Ricketts over a week ago, but disappointingly have heard no response. With this statewide coalition of advocates, we hope to have movement as soon as possible ahead of the COVID-19 peak."

Nationwide, disability rights advocates have filed complaints with the federal Office of Civil Rights to prevent implementation of discriminatory rationing policies. "If any Nebraskan has confronted medical rationing, we urge you to [contact Disability Rights Nebraska](#) so we can investigate," Evans said.

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Disability Rights Nebraska is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) that has been designated to provide protection and advocacy services in Nebraska. Disability Rights Nebraska is the only organization mandated to pursue legal and/or other remedies to defend the rights of Nebraskans with disabilities. Learn more at disabilityrightsnebraska.org.

Individuals from the following organizations also signed on to our follow-up letter:

The Arc of Nebraska	ACLU Nebraska	Nebraska Appleseed
Nebraska Developmental Disabilities Council	University Center for Excellence on Disabilities, MMI, UNMC	Down Syndrome Alliance of the Midlands
Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired	Nebraska Statewide Independent Living Council
Sheltering Tree	Legal Aid of Nebraska	Ollie Webb Center, Inc.
Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska	Paralyzed Veterans of America, Great Plains Chapter	People First of Nebraska, Inc.

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