

# Disability Rights Nebraska

Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities

May 14, 2019

Dear Senators:

Disability Rights Nebraska is the designated Protection and Advocacy organization for people with disabilities in Nebraska. We work to ensure that Nebraskans with disabilities, especially those who are most vulnerable, are free from harm, abuse, and neglect, and are able to exercise the same rights, opportunities and choices available to all citizens so that they may live fully integrated and culturally valued lives. We are in full support of LB 43.

Results from a recent study by National Public Radio<sup>1</sup> indicate that people with intellectual disabilities are sexually assaulted at approximately seven times the rate of people without disabilities. This abuse often goes unrecognized, unreported, and unpunished—a truly hidden epidemic.

While we recognize that LB 43 does not attempt to stem the occurrence of this hidden epidemic, we support the legislation's clear enumeration of rights for sexual assault survivors. We also laud the bill's provision allowing a survivor to consult with and have present an advocate of their choice during evidentiary or physical examinations. Given the vulnerability of individuals with developmental disabilities, having an advocate during such a trying and stressful process is of particular importance.

We would recommend advancing the bill during the remaining days of this session or resuming this important conversation during the second session in 2020.

Sincerely,

Bradley A. Meurrens  
Public Policy Director

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<sup>1</sup> "NPR Investigation Finds Hidden Epidemic Of Sexual Assault", January 8, 2018, available at <https://www.npr.org/2018/01/08/576428410/npr-investigation-finds-hidden-epidemic-of-sexual-assault>