

# Disability Rights Nebraska

Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities

**Testimony on LB 620  
Before the Judiciary Committee  
Nebraska Legislature  
February 10, 2021**

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Good afternoon Senator Lathrop and members of the committee. For the record my name is Brad B-R-A-D Meurrens M-E-U-R-R-E-N-S and I am the Public Policy Director at Disability Rights Nebraska. We are the designated Protection and Advocacy organization for persons with disabilities in Nebraska, and I am here today in support of LB 620.

Solitary confinement places “all of the prisoners exposed to it at grave risk of harm”<sup>1</sup>. Research indicates inmates in solitary confinement often develop multiple, significant adverse psychological impacts, including but not limited to: psychosis; extreme paranoia; depression; irritability, anger, aggression, rage; cognitive dysfunction. Many prisoners gradually lose the ability to initiate or to control their own behavior, their ability to cope with social interaction, or they disassociate from reality:

“For many prisoners, the absence of regular, normal interpersonal contact and any semblance of a meaningful social context in these isolation units creates a pervasive feeling of unreality. Because so much of our individual identity is socially constructed and maintained, the virtually complete loss of genuine forms of social contact and the absence of any routine and recurring opportunities to ground thoughts and feelings in a recognizable human context lead to an undermining of the sense of self and a disconnection of experience from meaning. Some prisoners experience a paradoxical reaction, moving from initially being starved for social contact to eventually being disoriented and even frightened by it. As they become increasingly unfamiliar and uncomfortable with social interaction, they are further alienated from others and made anxious in their presence. In extreme cases, another pattern emerges: this environment is so painful, so bizarre and impossible to make sense of, that they create their own reality—they live in a world of fantasy instead.”

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<sup>1</sup> Congressional prepared testimony of Craig Haney, 2012, before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights Hearing on Solitary Confinement, June 19, 2012, p. 10, available at <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/12-6-19HaneyTestimony.pdf>

Additionally, extended use of solitary confinement “renders many people incapable of living anywhere else”<sup>2</sup> — which will complicate or prevent successful re-entry/transition to the community.

Disability Rights Nebraska supports restricting the duration of solitary confinement in LB 620 and we recommend LB 620 be advanced.

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

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<sup>2</sup> “In other words, they have to transform themselves, their habits of being, their ways of acting and thinking and relating to themselves as well as the world, premised on the assumption that they will not be around other human beings. And they actually get to the point where they find that it is frightening to be around other people.”

Verbal statement of Craig Haney during question and answer with Senator Durbin at the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights Hearing on Solitary Confinement, June 19, 2012, available at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-112shrg87630/html/CHRG-112shrg87630.htm>.