

February 2, 2021

Senator Steve Lathrop , Chair
and Members of the Judiciary Committee
State Capitol, Lincoln NE

RE: **Oppose** LB 663 (Geist) - Require the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice to create a mental health indicator in a criminal justice information system to alert emergency dispatch operators

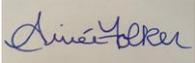
Dear Senator Lathrop and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Please include this written testimony from the League of Women Voters of Nebraska as part of the public hearing record for LB 663 The League of Women Voters of Nebraska (LWVNE) supports an adequately funded mental health care system that provides comprehensive and coordinated services for children and adults with mental disorders. We support state and local policies and programs that provide the opportunity for persons with mental disorders to achieve optimal management of their illness.

That being said, for the record, the LWVNE opposes LB 663. Whatever the intent to aid those in mental and behavioral health crises, maintaining a database of those who have been committed, however long ago, is akin to placing a scarlet letter on their chests. It serves to criminalize mental illness and creates a “danger” flag for those seeking help. This bill states this indicator would serve as a tool, but tools are only safe and effective when they are utilized by those trained to use them and this bill does not provide any guarantee of training, nor does it guarantee to provide relevant or timely information. Knowing an “individual [was] assigned custody under the Department of Health and Human Services for inpatient treatment by a mental health board” once upon a time, does not aid them in seeking help currently. It only serves to label them.

Many people who have never been committed to the Board of Mental Health have mental and behavioral health crises, but those individuals would not show up on this list, and vice versa, someone who was prescribed a medication that caused a psychosis 35 years ago would, despite having no episodes since then. This database would only serve to perpetuate stigma with no benefit to those who live with brain disorders. Brain disorders are, like any health record, private matters. We do not keep a database of diabetics who have gone into insulin shock and nor should we keep lists of those who have completed treatment under the Board of Mental Health.

Sincerely,



Aimee Folker
Co-Director, Mental and Behavioral Health
LWVNE



Dianne Bystrom
Co-President
LWVNE



Linda Duckworth
Co-President
LWVNE