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February 9, 2021

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

RE: LB 624 (McCollister) Provide for earned time credit reductions to the minimum terms of sentences of offenders at facilities of the Department of Correctional Services.

Support

Please include this position statement from the League of Women Voters of Nebraska as part of the public hearing record for LB 624.

Dear Senator Lathrop and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska believes alternatives to imprisonment should be explored and utilized, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime. We also support educational and retraining programs when needed at any point of an individual's career through programs that assist people to become self-supporting, contributing members of society. We believe in a community environment that is beneficial to life and to resource management in the public interest. Allowing inmates to earn time through employment, education and other programs for healing or self-improvement contributes positively toward the better future we envision.

Nebraska taxpayers spend \$36,000 a year for each community member who is incarcerated. We must spend this money and time wisely, so that at the end of this period, a person emerges who can care for themselves and their families. Released inmates, who typically have a 40% loss in earning power, are often forced back into the system if no other means of self-support are available. Providing the incentive to work hard to earn back days of their lives as productive citizens makes us good stewards of both financial and human resources. We will spend less money on incarceration and re-incarceration, and we will receive in return community members who have the education, training and social/emotional skills necessary to be whole and productive.

Additionally, an earned reduction in time could be of great benefit to the children of incarcerated parents. These children may be taken into foster care, become homeless, be driven into poverty, have difficulty in school and/or suffer emotional or psychological wounds. Of the women in jail, 80% are mothers.

Please advance this bill to General File for full floor debate.

Sincerely,

Sara Lee, Social Policy Committee
Carol Dennison, Director of Social Policy
Linda Duckworth, Co-President
Dianne Bystrom, Co-President
League of Women Voters of Nebraska