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February 28, 2023

Senator Justin Wayne, Chair, and Members of the Judiciary Committee
State Capitol, Lincoln, NE

RE: LB348 (Wayne) Adopt the Community Work Release and Treatment Centers Act and change provisions relating to the Board of Parole, the Department of Correctional Services, and the Office of Probation Administration

SUPPORT – *Please include this position statement from the League of Women Voters of Nebraska as part of the public hearing record for LB348.*

Dear Senator Wayne and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes alternatives to imprisonment should be explored and utilized, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime. We also oppose mandatory minimums for drug offenses.

Recently, the Nebraska Criminal Justice Reinvestment Initiative collected important information regarding the status of incarceration in our state over a period of 10 years.¹ The findings were both helpful and interesting. While current new incarcerations admissions have fallen 21%, the total population has actually increased by 21% in the same amount of time. This is due to longer sentences (up 34%), and fewer parole grants (down from 78% to 58%).

With admissions outpacing releases, nearly every facility is operating above capacity, making our current situation unsafe, unsustainable and unaffordable. Given that more than half (56%) of the crimes committed were non-person/non-sex offenses, and that 26% of them were drug offenses,¹ we need to look for alternatives to incarceration. What we're doing now isn't working.

If adopted, this bill could be the breath of fresh air we need to turn the corner on a growing problem we face as a state – ever higher spending on incarceration. It provides for individualized programming that includes therapy, vocational training, education classes, life skills instruction, and the opportunity to obtain/renew an ID card or driver's license. It prepares each incarcerated person with the tools necessary to transition successfully back into the community, all while reducing costs.

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska believes that this bill will lessen the strain on our corrections facilities, improve transition outcomes and reduce costs. Please advance LB348 to General File.

Thank you for considering our position and for all you do for our state.

Sincerely,

Sara Lee, Social Policy Action Team, LWVNE
Jill McDermott, Social Policy Director, LWVNE
Carol Dennison, Social Policy Action Team, LWVNE
Rachel Gibson, Vice President-Action, LWVNE
MaryLee Moulton, President, LWVNE

¹Crime and Justice Institute. (2022, January 12). *Nebraska Criminal Justice Reinvestment Initiative* [PowerPoint slides]. <http://news.legislature.ne.gov/jud/files/2022/03/CJI-Overview-Presentation-for-Senators.pdf>