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February 12, 2024

Senator Robert Clements, Chair, and Members of the Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Lincoln, NE

RE: LB944 (Dorn) – Provide for use of the Medicaid Managed Care Excess Profit Fund for behavioral health needs

SUPPORT – *Please include this written testimony from the League of Women Voters of Nebraska as part of the public hearing record for LB944.*

Dear Senator Clements and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

The League of Women Voters believes that a basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost should be available to all Nebraskans. Toward that end, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska supports the amending of section 68-996, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2022, as proposed in LB944.

The original supplement created the Medicaid Managed Care Excess Profit Fund. LB944 would tailor the use of those funds specifically toward an increase in provider service rates. This increase in service rates would be a critical factor in attracting and retaining qualified mental health providers.

Recent statistics indicate that 62,000 Nebraska adults have a serious mental illness.¹ Lincoln County, home to North Platte, has 54 mental health providers for its 35,000 people, or 1.5 providers per 1,000 county residents. Contrast that with Lancaster County, where the rate is 2.3 providers per 1,000 or to the 29 counties in Nebraska have 0 providers.² A February 2023 article published by the University of Nebraska Medical Center noted that “88 of Nebraska’s 93 counties are considered to have a shortage of behavioral health professionals. Twenty-nine counties don’t have any behavioral health professionals at all.”³

This amendment provides for a long-due increase in Medicaid provider rates and removes any ambiguity regarding the purpose of the funds. For these reasons, the LWWNE supports LB944 and urges you to advance it to the General File. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mary Kelly, Disability and Behavioral Health Action Team, LWWNE
Rachel Gibson, Vice President-Action, LWWNE
MaryLee Moulton, Co-President, LWWNE

- ¹National Alliance on Mental Health. (2021, February). Mental Health in Nebraska. NAMI. <https://nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/StateFactSheets/NebraskaStateFactSheet.pdf>
- ²Bauer, W. (2022, September 13). Getting rural Nebraskans mental health care remains a challenge. *Nebraska Public Media*. <https://nebraskapublicmedia.org/en/news/news-articles/while-there-are-more-mental-health-providers-statewide-getting-rural-nebraskans-care-remains-a-challenge/>
- ³Ostrowwicky, J. (2023, February 7). BHECN: Supporting behavioral health across the Nebraska. *University of Nebraska Medical Center*. <https://www.unmc.edu/newsroom/2023/02/17/bhecn-supporting-behavioral-health-across-nebraska/>