



Hundredth Legislature - First Session - 2007
Introducer's Statement of Intent
LB 296

Chairperson: Joel Johnson
Committee: Health and Human Services
Date of Hearing: January 18, 2007

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

LB 296 is introduced by Senator Johnson at the request of the Governor to reorganize the Nebraska Health and Human Services System (HHSS).

HHSS is currently composed of three separate, but interrelated, agencies – the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), HHS Regulation and Licensure, and HHS Finance and Support – overseen and coordinated by a Policy Cabinet. The Policy Cabinet consists of the three department directors, the state's Chief Medical Officer, if one is appointed, and is chaired by a Policy Secretary. Members of the Policy Cabinet are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Legislature. The current system was proposed by Governor Ben Nelson and adopted by the Legislature in 1996 (LB 1044).

LB 296 would collapse the three existing departments into a single code agency (the Nebraska Health and Human Services System), with a single chief executive officer, comprised of six new departments: the Departments of Public Health, Medicaid, Children and Family Services, Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Veteran's Homes. The Policy Cabinet and the Policy Secretary position are eliminated.

Directors of the new departments and the agency CEO are appointed by the Governor and approved by the Legislature. The Governor must appoint a separate Chief Medical Officer if the Director of the Department of Public Health is not a physician.

The number of HHSS employment positions not covered by sections 81-1301 to 81-1319 (the State Personnel System) is increased from 17 to 25. HHSS service area administrators are added to the list of specifically exempted employees.

The bill makes other technical changes to existing provisions relating to the Office of Juvenile Services and the state's veterans' homes, and requires the preparation of an amendment to harmonize provisions of the bill with numerous other sections of existing law.

The bill outright repeals several sections. The bill has an operative date of July 1, 2007 with the emergency clause.

Principal Introducer:

Senator Joel T. Johnson