



7521 Main Street, Suite 103  
Omaha, Nebraska 68127

(402) 597-3100  
[www.voicesforchildren.com](http://www.voicesforchildren.com)

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michael Beverly, Jr., MBA  
*President*

Danita Webb, Ed.D.  
*Vice President*

Tim Hron, MA, LIMHP  
*Secretary*

Gary Bren  
*Treasurer*

Jill Batter, Esq.  
Al Davis  
Daniel Gutman, J.D.  
Christina Kahler  
Bruce Meyers  
Emily Mwaja  
Patty Pansing Brooks  
Kimara Snipes  
John Stalnaker, J.D.  
Kate Noble Weitz  
Lia Whitehead

Juliet Summers, J.D.  
*Executive Director*

February 15, 2023

To: Chairperson Wayne and Members of the Judiciary Committee  
From: Anahí Salazar, Policy Coordinator for Voices for Children in Nebraska  
**RE: Support for LB 60, changing provisions relating to room confinement of juveniles and required reports.**

Every young person in the juvenile justice system should receive rehabilitative services for a second chance to succeed. Uncompassionate and antiquated practices like the use of solitary confinement mar children's opportunity for rehabilitation and recovery. Voices for Children supports LB 60, because it will ensure youth in our state-run facilities do not experience the harmful effects of solitary confinement.

Keeping a young person locked in a cell for an undetermined period of time can cause serious neurological and physical issues.<sup>1</sup> Confinement has even been referred to as a form of torture because of how dangerous it can be.<sup>2</sup> Young people in confinement, eat, sleep, go to the bathroom all within the same small space, most of the time without any windows.<sup>3</sup> Teenagers need healthy social environments to grow into well-adjusted adults, and extended segregation from their peer community is linked to increased mental health concerns and heightened rates of suicide. One study found that half of incarcerated young people who committed suicide were room-confined at the time.<sup>4</sup> For these reasons, the United Nations prohibits juvenile solitary confinement, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) opposes its use.<sup>5</sup>

Currently, our state facilities are required to report to the Legislature the incidents of room confinement of minors at their facilities, and clarifying conditions of confinement in certain types of facilities. Through facility reporting, we have seen facilities reduce their use of room confinement, and so we know it can be done safely and effectively. We still have too many youth spending too many hours in isolation.

LB 60 further enhances oversight of the use of confinement in juvenile facilities, by that any uses of it shall be documented, and requiring supervisor approval in writing for any confinement longer than one hour. By specifying reporting requirements and requiring reports quarterly rather than annually, we can continue to track and analyze how this harmful practice is still being used across Nebraska.

<sup>1</sup> Leonard, Jayne. "Effects of Solitary Confinement on Mental and Physical Health." *Www.medicalnewstoday.com*, 7 Aug. 2020. [www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/solitary-confinement-effects#physical-health-effects](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/solitary-confinement-effects#physical-health-effects).

<sup>2</sup> "The Effects of Solitary Confinement on the Brain." *Psychology Today*, [www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/brain-chemistry/201902/the-effects-solitary-confinement-the-brain#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20most%20remarkable%20effects%20of%20chronic](http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/brain-chemistry/201902/the-effects-solitary-confinement-the-brain#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20most%20remarkable%20effects%20of%20chronic).

<sup>3</sup> Leonard, Jayne. "Effects of Solitary Confinement on Mental and Physical Health." *Www.medicalnewstoday.com*, 7 Aug. 2020. [www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/solitary-confinement-effects#physical-health-effects](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/solitary-confinement-effects#physical-health-effects).

<sup>4</sup> Lindsay M. Hayes. *Juvenile Suicide in Confinement: A National Survey*. National Center of Institutions and Alternatives, 2004. Available at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/grants/206354.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> 4 Juvenile Justice Reform Committee. *Solitary Confinement of Juvenile Offenders*. American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. Available at [https://www.aacap.org/aacap/policy\\_statements/2012/solitary\\_confinement\\_of\\_juvenile\\_offenders.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/aacap/policy_statements/2012/solitary_confinement_of_juvenile_offenders.aspx)

Other states and jurisdictions, including the federal prison system, have taken proactive steps to reduce or eliminate room confinement of children. LB 60 is the right next step for Nebraska to continue on the path to full elimination of this practice. Young people should not be locked up in a room, Nebraska can do better, and it is past time that we did. We thank Senator Cavanaugh for his commitment to improving our juvenile justice system, and the Committee for your time and consideration of this bill. I urge you to advance LB 60.