

OPPOSE AM 2270

STOP AND STUDY THE RELOCATION OF NE YRTC FACILITIES

INTRODUCED AS **LB 1013** | AMENDED INTO **LB 867** AS **AM 2270**

OUR CORE PRINCIPLE

When children are in state custody, the state has a heightened duty of care. Administrative timelines should never move faster than safety, stability, and rehabilitation.

WHAT IS AT STAKE

AM 2270 would accelerate major structural changes to Nebraska's youth facilities, including movement of all Nebraska Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers (YRTCs).

THESE CHANGES ARE MOVING FORWARD ON A RUSHED TIMELINE WITHOUT TRANSPARENCY, ADEQUATE SAFEGUARDS FOR YOUTH SAFETY, STABILITY, AND OUTCOMES.

PROPOSED RELOCATION PLANS

YOUTH CURRENTLY HOUSED AT	MOVED TO
Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility (NCYF) in Omaha	adult prison at Nebraska Department of Corrections Reception and Treatment Center (RTC) in Lincoln
YRTC-Kearney	what is currently NCYF in Omaha
YRTC-Hastings	YRTC-Kearney
Whitehall Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF), a campus in Lincoln for kids with sexually harmful behaviors	YRTC-Hastings
DHHS would vacate Whitehall property	

At a February 6, 2026 hearing for LB 1013, Dr. Bish, Director of the Division of Children and Family Services within Nebraska DHHS, stated that all facility moves would be completed by the end of 2026. She indicated that staff training would begin in May 2026, with youth transfers starting as early as July 2026.

We are deeply concerned that this timeline is insufficient for a transition of this magnitude. With the likelihood that many current staff will not relocate, a three-to-six-month window to hire, train, and stabilize new teams while moving youth across four facilities presents significant safety and stability risks.

WHAT WE ARE ASKING

Strike the portions of AM 2270 that permit these changes this year.

Introduce and pursue a legislative resolution interim study examining the project plan.

Require a comprehensive, public transition plan with stakeholder input and safety benchmarks.

Ensure continuity of education, mental health care, and family access before any transfers occur.

Establish legislative oversight, a meaningful mechanism for evaluation of the YRTC system and rehabilitative goals, and phased implementation of any identified plan to move youth.

WHY THIS MATTERS

YOUTH SAFETY AND STABILITY COME FIRST

- **Sudden transfers** increase trauma and instability.
- **Disruption in mental health care**, education, and case planning can cause long-term harm.
- **Increased risk of overuse or misuse of room confinement** for youth transferring from YRTC Kearney to NCYF. Because NCYF utilizes individual rooms that lock, there is heightened concern that room confinement could be used as a behavior management tool rather than relying on developmentally appropriate, therapeutic interventions that promote regulation, accountability, and growth.
- **Rapid restructuring** seems likely to lead to staffing shortages and unsafe conditions.
- **Destabilization** contributes to lack of meaningful rehabilitation, possibility of reoffense, and diminishes future community safety.

CHILDREN SHOULD NOT BEAR THE RISK OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS.

EDUCATION MUST NOT BE DISRUPTED

- Youth in state custody are entitled to quality education.
- Transfers can result in:
 - Lost credits
 - IEP interruptions
 - Delays in graduation
 - Loss of programs for males such as community service projects and vocational classes
- Education is one of the strongest protective factors against reoffending.

SYSTEM REORGANIZATION CANNOT COME AT THE EXPENSE OF LEARNING.

RUSHED REFORM CAN EXPAND HARM

- Increase reliance on secure beds for males
- Instability often correlates with increased use of restraints or isolation.
- Structural disruption can unintentionally lengthen stays.

REFORM MUST REDUCE INCARCERATION, NOT DESTABILIZE YOUTH FURTHER.

MAJOR SYSTEM CHANGES REQUIRE TRANSPARENCY

- No comprehensive public transition plan has been fully vetted.
- Stakeholders, including families and youth, have had limited meaningful input.
- There has been insufficient public reporting on:
 - Staffing models
 - Safety benchmarks
 - Cost comparisons
 - Racial equity impact
 - Impact on community safety

LARGE-SCALE RESTRUCTURING DEMANDS PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY.

DETAILS

17.6%
increase in the YRTC
populations as of
12/31/2025.¹

107
youth committed to
treatment in YRTCs

88
boys

19
girls

7.7 MONTHS
is the average
length of stay.



1. Nebraska Foster Care Review Office Quarterly Report March 2026.