



PRESS RELEASE
March 20, 2020

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**Nebraska Advisory Committee to the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights Releases Report:
*Civil Rights, Prisons, and Mental Health in Nebraska***

The Nebraska Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released a report following a series of panel discussions on prison conditions facing individuals with mental health concerns in the state. The report examines the extent to which such individuals are afforded equal access to medical services, such as adequate mental health and psychiatric care, and reasonable protections from injury or the risk of injury while incarcerated.

In this study, the Committee heard testimony from community members, including formerly incarcerated individuals; advocates; legal professionals; and government officials. Through this testimony, the Committee identified a number of concerns regarding: (1) prison overcrowding; (2) staffing shortages; (3) the widespread use of solitary confinement, including with juveniles; (4) the delivery of mental health programs and services; and (5) the availability of re-entry, discharge, and rehabilitative programming. The report includes a review of current criminal justice reform efforts. It concludes with a series of recommendations regarding actions that can be taken to understand and address the identified civil rights issues moving forward.

Committee Chair Dr. Jonathan Benjamin-Alvarado said, "The report offers us with a framework for understanding both the needs and the potential remedies that will assiduously address the centrality of the civil rights of the incarcerated in Nebraska, as it relates to their mental health. Without a doubt, the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services needs to improve the mental health treatment of the incarcerated in a manner that it is consistent with the letter and spirit of the state and federal legal requirements and standards if indeed Nebraska truly stands behind the motto 'Keep People Safe'."

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 51 state Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at state and local levels. The Commission: in our 7th decade, a continuing legacy of influence in civil rights. For information about the Commission, please visit www.usccr.gov and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).