

## **One Hundred Third Legislature - First Session - 2013**

### **Introducer's Statement of Intent**

#### **LB503**

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**Chairperson: Senator Brad Ashford**

**Committee: Judiciary**

**Date of Hearing:**

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

LB 503 provides a demonstration project to allow for "Alternative Response" to child abuse and neglect reports. These projects would be planned in consultation with the Nebraska Children's Commission. Following planning, DHHS could use Alternative Response in up to five designated locations, with a report due to the Legislature on December 15, 2014. They may expand alternative response to five more locations on January 1, 2015 with a report due to the Legislature by November 15, 2015. Use of Alternative Response after May 15, 2016 would require approval of the Legislature.

Alternative Response is a practice that allows for low-risk child welfare cases to be handled by empowering a family by building on their strengths, rather than investigating them for purposes of criminal charges or placement on the Child Abuse and Neglect Register. A caseworker works with such a family by assessing their needs and strengths and working with them on obtaining community services. Such cases would not be shared with law enforcement. However, if a caseworker has reason to believe that a child's safety is compromised, then he or she shall refer the family for a traditional DHHS investigation and to law enforcement. In addition, quarterly, aggregate, non-identifying information about the individual cases would be shared with outside agencies. Only the DHHS and the Inspector General of Child Welfare in Nebraska would have access to identifying information about the alternative response cases.

Cases that would not qualify for Alternative Response are those involving allegations of child fatality; physical abuse resulting in serious bodily injury; injury to a child sustained during a domestic assault; neglect resulting in bodily injury; the manufacturing or presence of methamphetamine; a report of an adult or caregiver residing in the home where such

caretaker has had his/her parental rights terminated; an abuse or neglect allegation where there is already a CFS investigation or where a family is receiving services already pursuant to an abuse or neglect charge; and a cases where a child has been recovered from a kidnapping.

**Principal Introducer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Senator Colby Coash**