

February 15, 2010

The Honorable E. Benjamin Nelson
United States Senate
720 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515



Dear Senator Nelson:

As you review your FY2011 appropriations requests, I ask that you support Epworth Village's FY2011 appropriations priorities:

- 1) Jumpstart of renovations, including energy efficiency upgrades, to the former York Middle School building which will enhance community services to at-risk youth and their families and other ADA compatibility issues--\$1,000,000**
AGENCY—Department of Housing and Urban Development and/or Department of Energy
ACCOUNT—Economic Development Initiative (EDI) and/or Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE)

In 2007, York Public Schools opened a new middle school, leaving vacant a 1910's era building that housed its former middle school. Since then, the 97,000 sq/ft building has been unused and empty at a cost to taxpayers.

While the building is ADA compliant and has previously undergone an asbestos abatement, significant energy efficiency concerns remain and must be addressed before it can be occupied and efficiently utilized. Epworth Village has agreed to assume the financial responsibility of this property, thereby relieving taxpayers.

Additionally, as Epworth Village is more than 120 years old, it owns and operates many facilities in excess of 80 years of age. The buildings have been properly maintained and they are structurally sound, but because of the age of these facilities they are not ADA compliant.

Epworth Village will combine federal funds with privately raised funds to upgrade the former York Middle School building. These upgrades will include the installation of energy efficient windows, high efficiency boilers, and high a efficiency chiller. Once the upgrades are complete, Epworth Village will use the building to offer afterschool programs to at-risk youth, parents and the community.

Epworth Village will also use federal and private funds to bring their current facilities in compliance with ADA regulations.

2) Jumpstart for mental health services for rural public schools and training for family practitioners--\$699,480

**AGENCY—Department of Health and Human Services and/or Department of Education
ACCOUNT—Substance Abuses and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA
and/or Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE)**

Ninety-five percent of Nebraska's counties (89 of 93) have been designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as Mental Health Professionals Shortage Areas (MHPSA). Eighty-eight percent of Nebraska's counties (82 of 93) have no registered psychiatrist located in the county. Compounding this shortage is the fact that nearly seven percent (32,000) of Nebraska's youth suffer from severe emotional problems.

As a result, school districts, most of which do not have the resources available to address the mental health needs of their students, and family practitioners, who often have not participated in mental health training since medical school, are tasked with providing mental health assistance to these troubled youth.

Epworth Village will combine federal funds with privately raised funds to provide mental health services to rural public schools, free of charge to the school, as students are identified with a need of mental health treatment. In addition, Epworth Village will provide child psychiatric training seminars for family practitioners located in MHPSA.

After jumpstart funds have been expended, the mental health services provided to schools will be sustained through insurance and Medicaid dollars for the services provided by Epworth Village. The child psychiatric training seminars for family practitioners will be sustained by a modest seminar enrollment fee.

3) Jumpstart of substance abuse treatment for girls and preventative services for at-risk youth and families--\$561,200

**AGENCY—Department of Justice and/or Department of Health and Human Services
ACCOUNT—Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and/or
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**

Nebraska's high school aged girls suffer from serious drug and alcohol problems. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention more than 27 percent of female high school students engage in the destructive behavior of binge drinking. Additionally, more than 15 percent of the same population also uses illegal drugs. While more than 7,000 Nebraska girls (as compared to 5,000 Nebraska adolescent males) are in extreme need of substance abuse treatment, they do not receive it (source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). This abuse of drugs and alcohol has also lead to higher incidents in Nebraska of unwanted pregnancies for high school aged girls.

The State operates a facility for at-risk girls at the Juvenile Correction Facility for Girls in Geneva, NE, which is widely known as a "detention center." However, when girls are released from this facility, there are no programs in the state to assist them with their substance abuse issues.

Additionally, in order to lessen the eventual burden on the taxpayer, it is imperative to reach these at-risk youths before it becomes necessary for the local and/or state governments to become involved in their rehabilitation.

Epworth Village will combine federal funds with privately raised funds to provide a dual diagnosis (substance abuse and mental health) program for at-risk girls. Funds will also be used to provide preventative services to at-risk youth and their families so that they can avoid getting into more serious trouble with the local and state governments.

After jumpstart funds have been expended, this program will be sustained through fee for service dollars derived from private insurance and Medicaid.

**4) Jumpstart of residential and day-treatment programs for dual diagnosis handicapped youth (i.e. developmentally disabled and mentally ill)—\$810,000
AGENCY—Department of Health and Human Services and/or Department of Education
ACCOUNT—Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
and/or Rehabilitation Services and Disabilities Research Accounts**

Currently there are nearly 1,000 developmentally disabled (e.g. cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, muscular dystrophy, etc.) and mentally ill (e.g. anxiety disorders, disruptive behavior disorders, schizophrenia, etc.) youth in Nebraska. Unfortunately, many families do not have the financial means to care for their developmentally disabled and mentally ill child/children. As a result, the state must become involved in their care.

Currently, there are no programs for dual diagnosis handicapped youth in Nebraska. The state must send the developmentally disabled and mentally ill youth in their care (currently more than 100) out of state for treatment at Nebraska taxpayer expense. This also causes these extremely at-risk youth to be separated from their families, schools, peers and communities during one of the most critical times in their lives.

Epworth Village is well positioned to provide much needed services to Nebraska's developmentally disabled and mentally ill youth. Federal funds will be combined with private funding to jumpstart residential and day-treatment programs for dual diagnosis handicapped youth in Nebraska. Epworth Village's services in this arena will help relieve a significant financial and social burden from the local and state governments.

When State of Nebraska sends a developmentally disabled and mentally ill youth out of state, it receives a federal match which is used out of state. Epworth Village will sustain this residential and day-treatment program for dual diagnosis developmentally disabled youth by keeping not only these youth in Nebraska, but also the federal match dollars the State receives for treatment.

As you may recall, founded in 1889, Epworth Village is a 501c3 non-profit which began as an orphanage and is now a modern, state-of-the-art social service organization for children (ages 7 to 18) and their families. Epworth's programs focus on serving children with severe, emotional and behavioral disorders. Epworth's success with children and families is based on sophisticated concepts

Letter to Senator E. Benjamin Nelson
February 15, 2010
Page 4

carefully developed through proven, time-tested techniques and administered by trained, licensed professionals. More than 1,200 Nebraska children are served each month by Epworth's 150 full and part-time staff.

Thank you for your consideration and please don't hesitate to contact (reachable at 402.362.3353 (office), 402.366.6515 (cell) or tom@epworthvillage.org) me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas L. McBride".

Tom McBride, M.S.
President/CEO