

drugs, if you use minors to do your dirty work, you will be punished more severely if caught. It achieves this simply by upping the Nebraska felony classification one increment above that which would normally be charged if an adult were involved. This incidentally is the same method employed in federal law which allows for increased punishment on drug convictions where an adult has either distributed drugs to a minor or used a minor in a drug trafficking operation. This amendment would provide our state and local law enforcement officials with the same authority that exists at the federal level in prosecuting, convicting, and sentencing drug-related crimes where a child is involved. It would also give Nebraska a system of punishment which is commensurate with the crime, that is criminals who choose to corrupt our youth by introducing them to drugs or enlisting them in their distribution networks should and must suffer additional penalties for that crime. As you are also, I am sure, frightened and sickened, I am sure you are that drug dealers target societies most vulnerable group, its children, into the business of trafficking drugs and introduce them to other illegal activities. These criminals ensnare the young and then profit at these children's expense. Such exposure to crime often has a corruptive effect on an individual child's life with irreparable harm requiring exhaustive treatment and rehabilitative programs. The question before us and all Nebraskans is what can we do to protect and safeguard our children from a negative and criminal environment of the drug activity. Many knowledgeable people argue for tougher laws, more law enforcement officers, while others believe greater emphasis on education and rehabilitation is necessary. An honest evaluation of the problem would probably indicate that both views have merit, both are correct, and neither can be mutually exclusive of the other. In fact, the battle for the mental and physical health of our youth is not won with a single solution. It is rather a multidimensional social problem that can only be resolved if challenged with an equally diverse and unbending approach. The amendment I have offered for your thoughtful consideration this afternoon is a small but could be a significant contribution to the law enforcement part of that equation as it revises the Nebraska statute drug penalty law by incorporating the federal system of having laws specifically detailed for drug crimes where children are the victims. One of those who testified at the hearing of LB 1091 was a young man from my own district who is a senior in high school, Fremont High School. He is currently Boys State Governor of Nebraska and Ben Sass, in his testimony, said this. "This bill sends a