



Testimony in support of LB1157
Before the Executive Board of the 106th Nebraska Legislature
February 12, 2020

Chairman Hilgers, members of the committee, my name is Westin Miller, W-E-S-T-I-N M-I-L-L-E-R, I'm the Director of Public Policy for Civic Nebraska. We're a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization committed to creating a more modern and robust democracy for all Nebraskans.

So, you just heard me mention that improving public trust in elections is a core value of Civic Nebraska's policy positions. And for that reason I want to state the obvious – counting people as residents of the prisons in which they're incarcerated, rather than the communities from which they actually identify, is a surefire way to erode public trust in elections.

Conversations we have about this bill are all pretty much the same:

“Hey, Senator Vargas has a bill to stop prison gerrymandering, we support it.”

“What's prison gerrymandering?”

“Oh, it's when we count people as residents of their prisons instead of their last address for redistricting”

“We do WHAT?”

This is just one of those issues that feels fundamentally wrong to many Nebraskans. A prison is not a home.

This is a problem that is finally solvable. The census bureau now offers tools to count inmates at their pre-incarceration address, and seven states have committed to using that tool. We could easily become the eighth.

Counting inmates as residents of their pre-incarceration address is do-able, it provides the state and the legislature with more accurate data, and it's the right thing to do.

Thanks again to Senator Vargas and his team for this great idea. I'd encourage you all to take advantage of this opportunity to improve public trust in Nebraska elections. Thank you for your time and I'd be happy to answer any questions.