

A Victory for Physician Wellness: Nebraska Passes LB286 Safe Haven Legislation



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The State of Nebraska has taken a significant step towards supporting the physician community by passing LB286, a bill to provide a safe haven for physician wellness. Introduced by Senator Lynne

Walz on behalf of the Nebraska Medical Association (NMA), this legislation is designed to provide vital confidentiality protections for physicians participating in the LifeBridge Nebraska physician wellness program, creating a safe environment to address physicians' personal mental health and overall wellness.

LB286, amended into the omnibus Health and Human Services Committee bill LB227, aims to foster a confidential space where physicians can seek assistance without fear of reprisal or breach of privacy. It passed on final reading on June 1, 2023, and took effect on September 2, 2023, ushering in enhanced safeguards for physicians participating in LifeBridge Nebraska. The Nebraska Legislature's action acknowledges the invaluable contributions made by our physician healthcare leaders in Nebraska and emphasizes the significance of establishing a safe space for physicians to seek assistance for their mental health and well-being.

One of the pioneering programs in Nebraska, LifeBridge Nebraska offers a unique approach to supporting physicians. It connects physicians with a local peer physician coach and is available to all licensed physicians in the state, irrespective of NMA membership status. The best part? This program comes at no cost to you.

Under LB286, physicians participating in LifeBridge Nebraska will benefit from key confidentiality

protections. Let's take a closer look at what these protections entail:

1. Confidentiality of Participation: Any record of your participation in the LifeBridge Nebraska program is strictly confidential and cannot be discovered, subpoenaed, or subject to reporting requirements unless you voluntarily request the release of this information in writing. The only exception to this confidentiality protection is if your physician peer coach determines that your condition poses a danger to public health and safety due to your continued practice of medicine or surgery.

2. Protection from Disclosure: As a participant in the LifeBridge Nebraska program, you are not obliged to disclose your involvement to any healthcare facility, hospital, medical staff personnel, accreditation organization, graduate medical education oversight body, health insurer, government agency, or other entity. Your contact with or participation in the program may not be used as a condition for participation, employment, credentialing, payment, licensure, compliance, or any other requirement.

Furthermore, LB286 adds physician peer coaches to the list of exempt individuals concerning mandatory reporting. If the credentialed physician is serving as a physician peer coach in the LifeBridge Nebraska program and the physician receiving peer coaching services does not pose a danger to public health and safety through their continued practice of medicine or surgery, the peer coach will be exempt from the mandatory reporting requirements under the Uniform Credentialing Act.

"We are delighted to see the passing of LB286 as part of the comprehensive bill LB227," said Dr. Daniel Rosenquist, MD, immediate past president of the Nebraska Medical Association. "This legislation affirms



Nebraska’s dedication to the well-being of physicians and is a powerful statement of the state’s support for our physicians.”

LifeBridge Nebraska has already had a positive impact on the lives of numerous Nebraska physicians, and with the implementation of this legislation, the program is poised to reach even further. The program remains committed to supporting the physician community and is pleased that this legislation recognizes the invaluable contributions physicians make in meeting the needs of Nebraskans.

LifeBridge Nebraska aims to prevent or slow the progression of stress and burnout among physicians by taking a preventative approach. The program uses physicians as trained peer coaches. Any Nebraska-licensed physician can call the confidential line (1-888-569-2036) and be paired with a coach. Reasons for using the program vary, but the top reported reasons include stress, burnout, and issues with both personal and professional relationships. Physicians may come into the program who are on the verge of or in early stages

of burnout. Coaching topics have included managing workload, addressing EHR inefficiencies, and working on communications styles to be more effective in physicians’ personal and professional lives. Others have come into the program taking a proactive approach, and those sessions may center around career stage changes, building leadership skills, and engaging in self-care. Physicians using the program have been from both rural and urban settings, employed and private practice, and a range of specialties. This program is made possible by the generous contributions from hospitals, healthcare systems, payers, and corporate sponsors; all who have a vested interest in the health and wellness of our physicians.

As a physician, this legislation provides you with the assurance that seeking help for your mental health and well-being is protected and encouraged. The passing of this legislation is a victory for physician wellness, offering a safe haven where you can prioritize your personal well-being and ultimately provide the best care for your patients. □

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

- **Confidentiality of participation** in the LifeBridge Nebraska physician wellness program. No reporting to employer, insurance, credentialing board, payers, or licensure.
- **Protection from disclosure of participation.** You are not obligated to report you are participating in LifeBridge.



1-888-569-2036

Confidential Line to get paired with a coach

