

## Lawmakers debate notification for minors with STDs

Written by Joseph Moore  
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### Nebraska News Service

Lincoln—Nebraska lawmakers voted down a requirement that doctors prescribing medication to minors for the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases notify parents.

Senators voted 21 to 4 March 25th against the amendment, sponsored by Sen. Bill Kintner of Papillion, to Legislative Bill 528.

The bill, introduced by Sen. Sara Howard of Omaha, would allow doctors to prescribe medication to the partners of patients with chlamydia or gonorrhea without having to examine the partners.

Howard said the bill is targeted at those who are unable or unwilling to go to the doctor for treatment. She added that there is a high probability partners will reinfect each other if either one goes untreated.

Howard emphasized the threat STDs pose to infected women who are pregnant and the health of their children.

“Women with gonorrhea are more likely to miscarry,” Howard said.

She said Nebraska has the highest rate of chlamydia of any state in the country.

Howard didn't cite the source of her data, but figures from the federal Centers for Disease Control show that chlamydia positivity rates among women in Nebraska between 2001 and 2011 were below the national average. The chlamydia positivity rate among women aged 15-24 in Nebraska was about 7.9 percent in 2011.

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Kintner's amendment to the bill would require medical professionals to notify the parents of children under 18 year of age if they are prescribed medication to treat chlamydia or gonorrhea.

"For the state to step in between a parent and child is wrong, wrong, and wrong again," Kintner said.

He said parents have a right to be notified if their child has been prescribed medication for the treatment of an STD.

Sen. Lydia Brasch of Bancroft agreed. "It's not good public policy to start prescribing to minors without parental permission," she said.

Howard responded by saying that requiring parental notification would deter minors, who account for a sizable portion of STD cases, from seeking treatment, and pointing out that Nebraska would be the first and only state in the country to require such notification.

Sen. Jeremy Nordquist of Omaha said, "We don't need to create more barriers to minors getting care. That's what's causing the problem."

The Legislature will vote Tuesday on the bill itself.

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