

## 2018 LANCASTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

### **Standing Priority - Property Tax Relief**

Property tax relief continues to be the top legislative priority for Lancaster County.

Pressure on the property tax can be reduced by eliminating unfunded mandates which primarily benefit the State, including the obligation of counties to pay rent for certain Health and Human Services facilities under Neb. Rev. Stat. §68-130. Another way to reduce reliance on the property tax is to diversify county revenue sources. Potential new revenue sources for counties could include:

- Tobacco tax increase
- Occupation tax on wineries
- Remove sales tax exemption on soda, energy drinks, and candy, and earmark the proceeds for property tax relief
- LB 81 (Increase handgun fee from \$5 to \$25)

#### 1. **Funding for Adult Criminal Justice System Reform**

Lancaster County's jail population and probation housing costs have increased as a direct result of 2015 Neb. Laws LB 605. Funding for the County Justice Reinvestment Grant Program created under LB 605 should be maintained or increased to help offset these additional costs.

#### 2. **Funding for Juvenile Justice Reform**

Juvenile justice reform under 2013 Neb. Laws LB 561 is not being adequately funded. Additional funding should be appropriated for community-based post adjudication services, and existing funding levels for the Juvenile Justice Community Based Aid Program should be maintained or increased.

#### 3. **Allow Outpatient Treatment for Restoration of Competency to Stand Trial**

Pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §29-1823, criminal defendants found mentally incompetent to stand trial must be sent to the Lincoln Regional Center for treatment to remove the disability and restore competency. Allowing for outpatient treatment in appropriate cases could help reduce the County's jail population and also help reduce overcrowding at the Lincoln Regional Center.

#### 4. **Statutory Changes to Implement Statewide 24/7 Sobriety Program**

The 24/7 Sobriety Program has been successfully used in other states to reduce recidivism for alcohol-related offenses such as driving under the influence. Lancaster County is in the process of establishing a 24/7 program under the supervision of the County's Community Corrections Department. Statutory changes are needed to mandatory sentencing and drivers license provisions to provide incentives for participants to actively participate and complete the program.

#### 5. **Amend Neb. Rev. Stat. §23-3108 to Increase Minimum Purchasing Thresholds**

Purchasing thresholds under §23-3108 of the County Purchasing Act have not been amended since 2003. The threshold for requiring competitive sealed bids is presently \$20,000 or more; and should be raised to \$50,000. The thresholds for requiring at least three informal bids are presently a minimum of \$5,000 but less than \$20,000; and should be increased to a minimum of \$10,000 but less than \$50,000.