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January 23, 2015

Senator Les Seiler, Chairman – Judiciary Committee  
Room 1113, State Capitol Lincoln NE, 68509

**Re: Support for LB 219 – Change and eliminate child custody provisions and adopt the Uniform Deployed Parents Custody and Visitation Act**

Dear Chairman Seiler and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Children need strong and stable relationships with trusted adults to thrive and reach their full potential. Identity formation through familial and cultural connections is an extremely important part of childhood development; as an adverse childhood experience (ACE), parental separation can have significant and long-term consequences for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical health.<sup>1</sup>

Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 219 because it addresses the needs of children who experience the trauma of parental separation by prioritizing the protective effects of extended social support. While our voice on this issue is typically from the child welfare perspective, whenever a child's relationship with a parental figure is disrupted such as in a time of deployment, it is always important to ensure that they are able to maintain kinship and cultural connections. During a time of crisis, additional sources of stability and belonging can minimize the sense of loss that children often experience during parental separation.<sup>2</sup>

As a state, we must commit to a better understanding of how to best meet the needs of particularly vulnerable children. LB 219 recognizes the importance of family relationships and cultural connectedness to children who undergo the incredible stress of parental separation at a developmentally crucial period. We respectfully request that you advance this legislation and would be happy to answer any questions that may arise.

Sincerely,

Julia Tse, Child Welfare Policy Associate

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<sup>1</sup> David Murphey, "Home Front Alert: The Risks Facing Young Children in Military Families," ChildTrends.

<sup>2</sup> *Stepping Up for Kids: What Governments and Communities Can do to Support Kinship Families*, Annie E. Casey Foundation.