



# voices for children

IN NEBRASKA

*Telling the whole story.*

7521 Main Street, Suite 103  
Ralston, Nebraska 68127

(402) 597-3100 P  
(402) 597-2705 F

<http://voicesforchildren.com>

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Eric Nelson  
*President*

Tim Hron, MA, LIMHP  
*Vice President*

Donna Hammack, MSED  
*Secretary*

Steve Mitchell  
*Treasurer*

Yolanda Chavez Nuncio, MEd  
Catherine Damico, JD  
Jeremy Fitzpatrick, JD  
Joel Jacobs  
Eric Johnson  
Lloyd Meyer  
Daniel Padilla  
Mike Socha  
Tim Thoreson

Carolyn D. Rooker, MSW  
*Executive Director*

*A member of:*



*Find us on:*



March 4, 2015

To: Members of the Health and Human Services Committee  
From: Jenna Sutton, Policy Associate  
**RE: Support for LB 240**

Access to quality and appropriate behavioral health services for children is essential to ensure that all children have the opportunity to participate in normal childhood activities and grow up to be healthy and productive adults. Early screening and prevention techniques as well as timely and affordable treatment are crucial supports for children dealing with behavioral health issues.

In 2013, LB 556 established a behavioral health pilot program that incorporated behavioral health into primary care settings and made behavioral health services more accessible to Nebraska's children through telehealth. This program allows behavioral health issues in kids to be identified earlier, monitored more regularly, and treated more efficiently.

In Nebraska, it is estimated that 90,000 children and youth have a behavioral health disorder. At least half of these children and youth experience significant impairment from such issues, and 21,000 experience extreme impairment.<sup>1</sup> 29,294 Nebraska children received mental health and substance abuse services through Medicaid or CHIP in 2013.<sup>2</sup> However, 92 of Nebraska's 93 counties have a shortage of mental health providers, and many children are still not being served.<sup>3</sup>

The following number of children in Nebraska faced specified behavioral health problems:<sup>4</sup>

- Anxiety: 9,263 children
- ADD or ADHD: 15,870 children
- Behavioral or conduct problems: 7,770 children
- Depression: 4,636 children

As evidenced by the data above, the behavioral health screenings and preventative services described in LB 556 and continued in LB 240 can change many children's lives and have a significant positive impact at critical points in a child's development. Regular screenings and treatment can help place kids on the best possible path toward a healthy and successful future and target behavioral and mental health issues before they become a crisis.

The necessary behavioral health services continued through LB 240 make mental health screenings, diagnosis, and treatment available to all at-risk children. Voices for Children requests that the committee move this bill forward in order to improve the health of all Nebraska children.

Thank you.

<sup>1</sup> LB542 Report

<sup>2</sup> Financial and Program Analysis Unit, Department of Health and Human Services

<sup>3</sup> Health Resources and Services Administration, 2013

<sup>4</sup> Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health (2009-10 NS-NCSHCN) [childhealthdata.org](http://childhealthdata.org)