



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:



February 19, 2015

To: Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

From: Julia Tse, Child Welfare Policy Associate

RE: LB 296 – Require the Department of Health and Human Services to provide notification after removal of a child

When children cannot safely remain in their own homes, an effective response must consider both the needs and the strengths of each family on an individual basis.

Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 296, which would require the Department of Health and Human Services to notify all parents with legal custody of a sibling of the child who has been removed from their home.

Children in foster care are often exposed to multiple traumatic experiences with lifelong consequences, whether from the stress of parental separation, uncertainty about the future, or placement instability. A comprehensive response to child maltreatment should maximize all available resources to minimize trauma, including seeking engagement and support from the widest pool of family resources.

In recent years, the Legislature has acknowledged the importance of family-centered measures in our child welfare system, most notably by improving kinship care placements. Research shows that children in care do much better when they are with relatives or other close family friends because it provides the best possible source of stability and continuity in an otherwise difficult time.¹ **In 2013, about 34% of children in out-of-home care were placed with a relative or other trusted adult with whom they had a preexisting relationship.** While this represents significant progress, **about 43% of placements that same year were with a family unknown to the child, while nearly 17% were in an institutional setting.**²

The data shows that there is still work to be done, and by mirroring federal legislation passed in 2014, **LB 296 is another step forward for Nebraska's child welfare system that recognizes importance of social support to children experiencing significant disruptions in their lives.** When possible and appropriate, notifying more trusted adults upon removal can ensure that our system can swiftly identify individuals who are best situated to support and care for a child. Maintaining sibling ties can be crucial to a child's support system, especially during the emotional turmoil of a removal.

We thank Senator Kolterman and the committee for their leadership on this issue and respectfully urge you to advance LB 296.

¹ Winokur, M. et al, "Kinship Care for the Safety, Permanency, and Well-being of Children Removed from the Home for Maltreatment: A Systematic Review," *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 2, 2012.

² *Kids Count in Nebraska 2014 Report.*