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March 23, 2015

Senator Heath Mello, Chairman – Appropriations Committee
Room 1524, State Capitol Lincoln, NE 68509

RE: Support for LB 485 – State intent relating to appropriations for child welfare

Dear Chairman Mello and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

When children undergo abuse and neglect, it is important that our state's response be swift, child-focused, and minimize subsequent trauma. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 485, which would appropriate additional funds to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to create nine satellite offices of Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) across the state.

The seven nationally-accredited CACs in Nebraska provide invaluable services to our children and broader communities. When children are brought to a CAC, their physical, emotional, and psychological needs are supported and met by a multidisciplinary and highly trained team. In cases of maltreatment, our state has a responsibility to provide trauma-informed and coordinated services that seek to keep children safe.

Ease of access and timeliness are crucial in our immediate response to child abuse and neglect. For children who are removed from their homes, separation from trusted adults and interaction with child protective services or law enforcement can be an extremely stressful experience. LB 485 presents an opportunity for Nebraska to expand the important work of our CACs to better serve all children in the state, especially those in rural parts of the state.

We want to thank Senator Stinner for his work in bringing this issue forward and respectfully urge the committee to advance LB 485 forward for consideration by the full Legislature. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Julia Tse, Child Welfare Policy Associate