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March 3, 2016

To: Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

From: Juliet Summers, Policy Coordinator – Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice

**RE: Support for LB 697 – Apply for Medicaid funding of family functional therapy for eligible children**

Improving outcomes and reducing recidivism among at-risk youth requires thoughtful application of the right type of therapeutic response. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 697, because this bill would ensure sustainability for a program that has demonstrated success in improving outcomes for youth, their families and communities.

Last year, Voices for Children strongly supported LB 500, which required a state plan amendment for Multi-Systemic Therapy. With sustainable funding in place, we have seen steps taken in the past year between Juvenile Probation and the Behavioral Health Regions to make this special intervention available for families across our state. We expect, very soon, to begin to see the positive results as the therapeutic model rolls out.

Family Functional Therapy (FFT) was also initially included in that legislation, and we see LB 697 as the right next step to make a broad array of evidence-based, wraparound practices available for Nebraska families. FFT builds on child and family strengths, basing therapy on acceptance and respect. It emphasizes assessment and intervention, addressing risk and protective factors within and outside of the family. States that have implemented FFT with fidelity have demonstrated remarkable results. **Washington saw a net value of \$34,549 per participant, with a 641% rate of return on investment in the program.<sup>1</sup> Pennsylvania calculated a \$14.56 return on investment, with an estimated average economic benefit per community of \$12,395,953.<sup>2</sup>**

Increasing our ability to draw down funds to pay for this evidence-based approach will ensure a good return on our investment for at-risk youth. We thank Senator Howard for her continued work on behalf of children in Nebraska, and would respectfully urge the Committee to advance this bill.

<sup>1</sup> *Return on Investment: Evidence-Based Options to Improve Statewide Outcomes*. Washington State Institute for Public Policy: July 2011. Available at:

<http://www.fftllc.com/documents/latest%20WISPP%20report%20with%2018.98.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Damon Jones, Ph.D. et al. *The Economic Return on PCCD's Investment in Research-Based Programs*. The Prevention Research Center for the Promotion of Human Development: March 2008. Available at:

[http://www.fftllc.com/documents/PCCD\\_Report2.pdf](http://www.fftllc.com/documents/PCCD_Report2.pdf)