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February 3, 2014

To: Members of the Business and Labor Committee

From: Aubrey Mancuso, Policy Coordinator

Re: LB 943 and 947

Nebraska is a state that values family and work. We support LB 943 and LB 947 because we believe these bills are consistent with these values. We believe that parents working full time should be able to meet all of their children's basic needs without assistance.

Attached to my testimony is an updated version of a report called *the Family Bottom Line* that presents data on what Nebraska families need to meet basic needs based on county of residence, family size, and the ages of children. The costs presented in the report are based on a basic needs standard called the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard (FESS), which measures minimum average costs of things like housing, child care, food and transportation.

In every region of a Nebraska, a family with one or two working adults and children would not be able to meet all of their basic expenses working full-time on \$7.25/hour. I would like to draw your attention to pages 5 and 6 of the report which present aggregate costs of living for different regions of Nebraska.

The regions are based on the USDA rurality codes. Metropolitan counties are the larger counties and counties adjacent to large counties (like Lancaster County). Non-Metropolitan Urban counties have a population of at least 2,500 (like Adams County) and the Rural counties are less than 2,500 in population (like Banner County).

The data presented in the charts provide basic costs for a single parent and a two parent family in the regions described. You can see that the wage needed to support a family without assistance range from a minimum of \$8.70/per adult per hour for a two-parent family in rural Nebraska to \$22.06 per hour for a single parent with two young children in metropolitan Nebraska. None of these families would be able to meet their basic needs without assistance working full time on minimum wage.

I would also like to draw your attention to the graph on page 8 that shows median household income in Nebraska since 2000 updated for inflation. As you can see, median income in the state has fallen by 28% since that time. The cost of goods and services have risen by 33% in that same time frame -- widening the gap between what families are earning and what they need to meet basic needs.

We often hear that the solution to low wages is for parents to work more, but research shows that that simply isn't good for children. Nebraska already ranks the second highest in the nation for the percentage of workers holding multiple jobs.¹ In general, secure parental employment has a positive impact on children, but when parents work too many hours, children can be negatively impacted. One study found an association between higher rates of delinquency and aggression in pre-adolescent boys whose fathers worked 55 hours per week or more.² Long work hours can also create a "spillover" effect on children and family life in the form of high stress, poor coping, bad moods, and insufficient time and energy for people who are personally important.³

As someone who has advocated before this Legislative body for programs and services for economically struggling families, I have often heard it said that parents need to take care of their own children. We can't just tell parents to take care of their own children if we don't ensure that we have policies in place that allow them to earn enough to meet their children's basic needs and be the strong and stable role models that children need.

LB 943 and LB 947 are steps toward this goal and we respectfully urge the committee to advance these bills.

Thank you.

¹ Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2012), Multiple Jobholding in States

² Johnson et al. (2013) "Mothers' and Fathers' Work Hours, Child Gender and Behavior in Middle Childhood."

³ Peacock (2001) "The Effect of Long Hours on Family and Community Life: A Survey of Existing Literature"