



February 6, 2017

Senator Brasch, Chairwoman – Agriculture Committee
Room 2102, Nebraska State Capitol Lincoln, NE 68509

RE: Support for LB 260 – Provide for a state food insecurity nutrition incentive grant program

Dear Chairwoman Brasch and Members of the Agriculture Committee,

Proper nutrition is one of the most basic elements of proper development for a child. Still, the **staggering truth here in the nation's breadbasket is that 1 in 5 Nebraska kids don't know where their next meal is coming from.** Voices for Children supports LB 260 to create a state food insecurity nutrition incentive grant program.

After spiking during the recession, child poverty has begun to decline in our state—meanwhile, the number of households experiencing food insecurity in the Cornhusker State has continued to rise. **In 2015, there were over 111,000 Nebraska families that struggled to put food on the table for their children, which was a near 67% increase from 2006.**¹ Research shows that from a nutritional pathway perspective, food insecurity is detrimental to a child's health, behavioral functioning, and academic performance. Moreover, research has also shown that the stress and instability experienced by food-insecure caregivers can further harm children through its adverse effects on caregiving relationships and responsivity.²

In a tight household budget, low-cost but low nutrient-dense food is often the only option when other areas of the budget, such as child care and housing, are so costly. Nevertheless, a recent national study estimated that **availability of fresh produce in high-income communities was almost twice as high in low-income communities, where it is needed the most.** Barriers to fresh food only serve to compound many other adversities that children living in low-income neighborhoods experience. The study also showed that **access in rural communities were limited when compared to urban areas.**³ **In fact, in Nebraska, the counties with the highest rates of child food insecurity were not in our major metropolitan areas.**⁴

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¹ *Kids Count in Nebraska Report 2016*, Voices for Children in Nebraska, 57. Available online at: www.kidscountnebraska.com.

² Maureen Black, "Household Food Insecurities: Threats to Children's Well-being," American Psychological Association, June 2012.

³ D.C. Baker et al., "Availability of Healthy Food Products at Check-out Nationwide, 2010-2012," University of Illinois at Chicago, 2015.

⁴ Voices for Children in Nebraska, 107. Available online at:

<http://voicesforchildren.com/data-research/kids-count/neteractive/neteractive-es/>.

LB 260 would leverage federal dollars and support efforts to increase access to fresh and health foods in our communities. Improving accessibility to food is an essential part of ensuring the Good Life for everyone, especially our youngest Nebraskans. We thank Senator Hansen for bringing this important issue forward and this committee for their time and consideration. We respectfully urge the committee to advance this bill forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julia Tse". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Julia" being more prominent than the last name "Tse".

Julia Tse, Policy Associate