



February 6, 2017

Senator Riepe, Chairman – Health and Human Services Committee
Room 1510, Nebraska State Capitol Lincoln, NE 68509

RE: Support for LB 456 – Provide for supportive services for disabled parents in family and dependency matters

Dear Chairman Riepe and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

Children do best when they are a part of a supportive and loving family—we all benefit when families are strong and supported when faced with challenges. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 456 because it ensures that family and dependency matters are focused on parental behaviors and not a condition or disability.

The right to parent is one of the most fundamental rights protected by the U.S. Constitution, but it is clear that parents with disabilities have long faced discrimination and injustice in retaining custody of their own children. It is estimated that today, there are 4.1 million parents with disabilities, or over six percent of all parents, with minor children in the United States.¹ Studies show that parental disability is not linked to higher incidence of maltreatment or poor outcomes for children, and yet, parents with disabilities are disproportionately involved in our child protection systems.² An effective child welfare system should minimize trauma to children and seek to preserve families whenever possible.

We support LB 456 because it strengthens the rights of parents with disabilities while reaffirming that the focal concern of our state in dependency proceedings remains with child well-being and safety. We thank Senator Briebe for bringing this important issue forward and this committee for their time and consideration. We respectfully urge you to advance this bill forward.

Sincerely,

Julia Tse, Policy Associate

¹ National Council on Disability, *Rocking the cradle: Ensuring the rights of parents with disabilities and their children*, http://www.ncd.gov/rawmedia_repository/89591c1f_384e_4003_a7ee_0a14ed3e11aa.pdf, 14.

² E. Lightfoot and E. Slayter, “Disentangling over-representation of parents with disabilities in the child welfare system,” *Children and Youth Services Review* 47(3):283-290.

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