



7521 Main Street, Suite 103
Omaha, Nebraska 68127

(402) 597-3100
www.voicesforchildren.com

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January 23, 2018

Senator Groene, Chairman – Education Committee
Room 1525, Nebraska State Capitol, Lincoln, NE 68509

RE: Support for LR 270CA - Constitutional amendment to reduce the minimum age in the constitutional requirement to provide free instruction

Dear Chairman Groene and Members of the Education Committee,

Children are Nebraska’s greatest resource, and we all have a stake in ensuring that every child is able to reach their full potential in adulthood. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LR 270CA because it provides a systemic solution to providing all children with the tools they need to thrive in kindergarten and beyond.

For decades, child development research has continued to present policymakers with compelling evidence for policies that promote early childhood education. Positive learning experiences during these years produce lifelong effects on academic performance, health, and adaptive behavior, with particularly strong improvements for low-income children and dual language learners. Pre-kindergarten education provides rich opportunities for boosting brain development and providing children with the tools necessary to self-regulate in adversity.ⁱ This is particularly key in alleviating the barriers that many low-income children and children of color face in the educational system, which can result in inequities in short- and long-term educational outcomes.ⁱⁱ When all students start elementary school ready to learn, the state is able to maximize its existing investments in public education and prepare more young Nebraskans to meet ever-growing workforce demands.

More and more Nebraska parents understand the importance of early interventions— enrollment in public pre-kindergarten has increased by nearly 170% in the last decade, and currently, over 18,000 3- and 4-year-olds in Nebraska are enrolled in school-based preschool.ⁱⁱⁱ

Strengthening our investments in pre-kindergarten education produces the greatest return to Nebraska’s kids, taxpayers, future economic prosperity. We thank Senator Kolowski for his leadership on this issue and respectfully urge the committee to advance LR 270CA.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julia Tse".

Julia Tse, Policy Coordinator

ⁱ *The Current State of Scientific Knowledge on Pre-Kindergarten Effects*, The Pre-Kindergarten Task Force, Brookings Institution and Duke University, 2017, available at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/duke_prekstudy_final_4-4-17_hires.pdf.

ⁱⁱ *2016 Kids Count in Nebraska Report*, Voices for Children in Nebraska, available at: <http://kidscountnebraska.com/education/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*