



February 19, 2015

To: Members of the Judiciary Committee
From: Jenna Sutton, Policy Associate – Voices for Children
Re: Support for LB 415

7521 Main Street, Suite 103
Ralston, Nebraska 68127

(402) 597-3100 P
(402) 597-2705 F

<http://voicesforchildren.com>

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Eric Nelson
President

Tim Hron, MA, LIMHP
Vice President

Donna Hammack, MSED
Secretary

Steve Mitchell
Treasurer

Yolanda Chavez Nuncio, MEd
Catherine Damico, JD
Jeremy Fitzpatrick, JD
Joel Jacobs
Eric Johnson
Lloyd Meyer
Daniel Padilla
Mike Socha
Tim Thoreson

Carolyn D. Rooker, MSW
Executive Director



Find us on:



Voices for Children in Nebraska would like to express support for LB 415. The Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA) outlines regulations for implementing family support orders. Recent federal law requires that all states adopt new amendments to UIFSA that universalize regulations across state lines and internationally. The amendments must be enacted by the end of this 2015 legislative session in order for each state to continue to receive certain federal funds. Nebraska relies on federal funding to provide a number of necessary services to families in need across the state. If the appropriate amendments to UIFSA are not enacted, we will lose crucial funding for child support and economic assistance programs.

In fiscal year 2013, 66% of the total costs incurred by Administrative Expenses of Child Support Enforcement in Nebraska were covered by federal funding, a total of \$22,985,004. Without these funds, our child support system will suffer and children may not receive the financial support that they need and deserve.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds are also at risk if the UIFSA amendments are not enacted. In fiscal year 2012, Nebraska received \$57 million in “at risk” TANF funds. According to our annual *Kids Count in Nebraska Report*, during the fiscal year 2013, federal funding contributed 68% of TANF resources and losing funding could create severe deficits in assistance to Nebraska’s most needy families and children. The Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program is just one of several programs that use TANF funds, and it plays an important role in addressing child poverty and keeping families together under adverse financial circumstances. In 2013, an average of 14,530 children in Nebraska received ADC per month. Unfortunately, there is still a gap between ADC enrollment and the number of children living in extreme poverty, defined as living at or below 50% of the federal poverty line. If TANF funds were diminished, this gap may grow larger and force more children from their homes due to a family’s inability to take care of them and provide economic stability.

On Tuesday, state officials asked the Appropriations Committee for an emergency transfer of \$7 million from public assistance program to funds for child welfare services. Otherwise, they say, they will run out of money by April. In an article in the Omaha World Herald, Tony Green, director of the Division of Children and Family Services, stated that part of the shortfall is due to a loss of federal funding. The state failed to document how previous federal foster care payments were used for costs of actual care, and as a consequence, federal officials demanded a repayment for the federal payments made in 2010 through 2012.

This example illustrates that not complying with federal regulations can be extremely costly for the state and detrimental to essential programs and services that help Nebraska’s most needy children and families. We ask that LB 415 be advanced in order for the state to continue to receive crucial federal dollars for child support programs and TANF funds.