



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
Michael Socha

Aubrey Mancuso, MSW
Executive Director

A member of:



Find us on:



February 1, 2016

To: Senator Harr and Members of the Business and Labor
From: Aubrey Mancuso, Executive Director
Re: **LB 850, Paid Family and Medical Leave**

Thank you Senator Harr and members of the committee and thanks to Senator Crawford for her continued commitment to this issue. Voices for Children is in strong support of LB 850 because it ensures that workers can put their family first during times of critical need.

A new baby. A family member returning from military service with a critical injury. A car accident. A parent starting to show signs of Alzheimer's. A child diagnosed with Leukemia. These are all common and significant moments for a family that can create challenges for family well-being. Under our current law, these moments can also be a financial crisis. New data available at the state level reveal that about half of working parents in Nebraska are ineligible for even unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). For these parents, they are not guaranteed that their job will still be there when they need time off to care for their family. Even when they are entitled to leave, only 41% of Nebraska parents can afford to take it. **This leaves the majority – about 60% -- of Nebraska parents unable to afford leave.¹ This is especially critical in a state like ours where the vast majority of kids – 77.9% -- have all available parents in the workforce.²**

This is a problem that cuts against some of the most fundamental things that we value as Nebraskans -- an honest day's work, ensuring the best possible start in life for our kids, and being there to care for a family member when they need it. Paid family leave acknowledges and addresses a reality that directly impacts every business and should be planned for strategically, uniformly and deliberately.

The lack of paid leave comes at a cost to workers, families and businesses. Workers give up income they need to pay bills, buy groceries, and support their families. Workers, and especially women, lose or leave their jobs and put their long-term economic security at risk and increase their reliance on public assistance programs. Children lose out on better health outcomes right from the start by having their primary caregivers absent during a critical developmental time. Businesses can incur costs to replace talented and experienced employees and have their ability to compete for workers in a low-unemployment state like Nebraska limited.

In an ideal world, employers would offer this leave on a voluntary basis, but over 20 years after the passage of the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), that just hasn't happened. **Only 12 percent of employees nationwide have access to paid family leave and this access is disproportionately skewed toward higher wage**

¹ Diversitydatakids.org (2011-2014)

² Kids Count in Nebraska Report (2015)

earners. Only 5% of workers in the bottom 25% of wage earners have access to paid family leave compared to the 22% of workers in the top 10% of wage earners.³

Nebraska can do better than this on behalf of our kids and families. A state paid family leave program would level the playing field, provide a way to retain and attract workers, and provide a systemic solution to the current patchwork system that isn't working for families or businesses.

We respectfully urge the committee to advance LB 850 to ensure that no worker ever again has to choose between the job they need and the family they love.

Thank you.

² Gault, Barbara et al. (2014). *Paid Parental Leave in the United States: What the data tell us about access, usage, and economic and health benefits*, 23. Institute for Women's Policy Research.