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February 5, 2014

To: Members of the Appropriations Committee

From: Aubrey Mancuso, Policy Coordinator

Re: Support for LB 944

Voices for Children supports LB 944 because it builds on promising practices in the area of early childhood mental health and expands the available resources for children's mental health.

Early identification and treatment of behavioral health issues in children helps ensure that challenges are addressed before they become more costly and complicated to treat. During early childhood, a child's developing brain is particularly malleable, making it more vulnerable to both positive and negative experiences.¹ This malleability decreases as children age, so interventions in early childhood have a higher likelihood of long-term success.

The KidSquad Program in Omaha has used a similar evidence-based consultation model for mental health in young children and has found success. Based on teacher ratings, 60% of the children who had high behavior concerns at intake scored within the typical range after receiving KidSquad services and 74% of the classrooms receiving KidSquad services made other improvements on ratings including how teachers effectively prevented challenging behaviors.²

LB 944 expands the community-based resources available for early childhood mental health and builds on best practices. We respectfully urge the committee to advance this bill.

Thank you.

¹ Schore, A.N. (2001) Effects of secure attachment relationship on right brain development, affect regulation, and infant mental health. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 22(2), 7-66.

² Jackson, B., Zweiback, R. & Alvarez, L. (2012) KidSquad, a child care mental health consultation project. Evaluation report.