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children
IN NEBRASKA

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February 9, 2016

To: Members of the Agriculture Committee

From: Julia Tse, Policy Associate

Re: Support for LB 945 to adopt the Nebraska Healthy Food Financing Initiative Act

Dear Chairman Johnson and Members of the Agriculture Committee,

Proper nutrition is one of the most critical and basic elements of proper development for a child. Still, **the staggering truth here in the nation's breadbasket is that 1 in 5 Nebraska kids don't know where their next meal is coming from.** Voices for Children supports LB 945 to adopt the Nebraska Healthy Food Financing Initiative Act and its efforts to address food insecurity among children and families across our state.

After spiking in 2008, child poverty has begun to approach pre-Recession levels in Nebraska—meanwhile, the number of households experiencing food insecurity in the Cornhusker State has continued to rise. **In 2014, there were 106,196 Nebraska families that struggled to put food on the table for their children, which was a near 40% increase from 2006.**¹ Research shows that from a nutritional pathway perspective, food insecurity is detrimental to a child's health, behavioral functioning, and academic performance. Moreover, research has also shown that the stress and instability experienced by food-insecure caregivers can further harm children through its adverse effects on caregiving relationships and responsibility.²

In a tight household budget, low-cost but low nutrient-dense food is often the only option when other areas of the budget, such as child care and housing, are so costly. Nevertheless, a recent national study estimated that **availability of fresh produce in high-income communities was almost twice as high as in low-income communities, where it is needed most.** Barriers to fresh food only serve to compound many other disparities in indicators of well-being that we have observed for children living in low-income areas and children of color. The study also showed **that access in rural communities were limited when compared to urban areas.**³ **In fact, in Nebraska, all of our counties with the highest rates of child food insecurity were in nonmetropolitan areas.**⁴

LB 945 would support efforts to address food insecurity in our communities by targeting low-income and underserved areas. Improving access to affordable and healthy food in these areas is an essential part of ensuring the Good Life for everyone, especially young children.

We thank Senator Hansen for bringing this important issue forward and respectfully urge the committee to advance this bill forward. Thank you.

¹ *Kids Count in Nebraska Report 2015*, Voices for Children in Nebraska.

² Maureen Black, "Household Food Insecurities: Threats to Children's Well-being," American Psychological Association, June 2012.

³ D.C. Baker et al., "Availability of Healthy Food Products at Check-out Nationwide, 2010-2012," University of Illinois at Chicago, 2015.

⁴ See attached. Also viewable online at: <http://arccg.is/20MAa1K>.