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February 14, 2018

Senator Ebke, Chair – Judiciary Committee
Room 1113, Nebraska State Capitol, Lincoln, NE 68509
RE: Support for LB 1131 – Define minor child relating to dissolution of marriage statutes

Dear Chair Ebke and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Nebraska benefits when all children are able to reach their full potential in life. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 1131 because it ensures that children with a significant mental or physical health need are able to receive the support that they need in adulthood.

Our public systems must ensure that all children have equitable access to opportunity, particularly when a child faces a medical or other health-related condition that makes it more difficult for them to do certain activities or interact with the world around them. It is estimated that 3.7% of Nebraska kids, or 17,254 children, live with a disability today. When the disability of a child means that they will require assistance as a dependent beyond their childhood years, custodial parents need adequate supports to meet their needs.

Research shows that poverty is both a cause and consequence of disability—children living in poverty are more vulnerable to disease, while impoverished families are also less likely to receive adequate health care.ⁱ Nearly one-third of children with a disability live in poverty, nearly twice the rate of children living without a disability.ⁱⁱ The financial strain of caring for a child or dependent with a disability, in conjunction with the added stress of complex health and unique educational needs, require significant time and resources from family members. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 1131 because it creates parity within our child support statute to reflect the longer-term demands of a custodial parent to a child with a significant mental or physical health need.

We thank Senator Riepe for his leadership on this issue and this committee for their time and consideration. We respectfully urge you to advance LB 1131. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julia Tse", written in a cursive style.

Julia Tse, Policy Coordinator

ⁱ 2017 Kids Count in Nebraska Report, Voices for Children in Nebraska, 12.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*