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February 12, 2018

To: Chair Albrecht and Members of the Business and Labor Committee

From: Julia Tse, Policy Coordinator for Economic Stability and Health

**RE: Support for LB 844 - Adopt the Healthy and Safe Families and Workplaces Act**

Family and hard work are at the heart of Nebraska values. Parents of young children inevitably are faced with competing demands when a child becomes ill, but not every parent has the ability to do what is best for their child. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 844 because it ensures that working parents are able to care for a sick child without sacrificing their family's financial security.

Earned sick time ensures that children who are sick can receive a timely doctor's visit. Children, especially infants and toddlers, are particularly susceptible to sickness. In just the first 2 years of life, parents can expect their children to catch 8 to 10 colds.<sup>i</sup> It is estimated that over 77% of school aged children miss at least one school day per year due to an illness or injury.<sup>ii</sup> When parents are unable to take time off to stay at home with their children, they are more likely to send their child to school or daycare, where children will go on to spread illness.<sup>iii</sup> Moreover, being unable to bring their child to a physician's office during business hours, these parents are even more likely to take their child to the emergency room for costly treatment.<sup>iv</sup>

Today, eight states, 29 cities, two counties, and the District of Columbia have passed legislation ensuring that more workers have the ability to earn sick time off.<sup>v</sup> Time off to care for an ill family member, or your own illness, is good public health policy. The spread of influenza this year has been particularly alarming in Nebraska, which has seen 1,797 influenza-related hospitalizations in just January of this year, and 33 influenza-related deaths, including the death of 1 child this season.<sup>vi</sup> Research shows that a universal sick day policy reduced workplace transmissions by nearly 6%, and the provision of "flu days" reduced workplace infections of flu by as much as 40%.<sup>vii</sup>

The ability to earn paid sick leave varies significantly across industries and income levels, which necessitates a practical public policy intervention. Only half of workers in the service industry—those frequently in contact with the public—could take time off for an illness without financial consequences.<sup>viii</sup> Disparity in access is particularly magnified among lower-wage workers, who face the most pressure to continue working in spite of their illness or that of a family member. Last year, only 31% of workers in the lowest decile of wages had access to paid sick leave.<sup>ix</sup>

Evidence from comprehensive paid sick leave policies passed in jurisdictions across the country sheds some light on the cost of implementing such a policy in Nebraska. The results suggest that benefits will far outweigh the cost to businesses. When surveyed, the vast majority of employers in these jurisdictions expressed that paid sick laws had a minimal financial impact, alongside positive business and job growth in the local economy.<sup>x</sup> The benefit that paid sick leave provides to us all is far broader.<sup>xi</sup> Public dollars are saved in the form of reduced emergency room care and public assistance when a worker loses their job due to an illness. Employers save in the form of increased productivity, lower turnover, and

reduced rates of illness and injury. Finally, families win when children can receive timely and cost-effective medical care for an illness, and when parents can take time off without worrying about a loss of income.

We thank Senator Crawford for her leadership on this issue and the Committee for their time and consideration. We respectfully urge you to advance LB 844. Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> Steven P. Shelov and Tanya Remer Altmann eds., *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5* (New York: Aspen Publishers, 2009).

<sup>ii</sup> "Missed School Days," *The Health and Well-Being of Children: A Portrait of States and the Nation 2011-12*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal Child Health Bureau, 2014, <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/nsch/2011-12/health/more-information.html>.

<sup>iii</sup> Tom W. Smith and Jibum Kim, "Paid Sick Days: Attitudes and Experiences," National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago and the Public Welfare Foundation, June 2010, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-attitudes-and-experiences.pdf>.

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>v</sup> "Overview of Paid Sick Time Laws in the United States," A Better Balance, October 2017, <https://www.abetterbalance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Chart-and-Overview-of-Paid-Sick-Time-Laws-in-the-US-Updated-10-5-17.pdf>.

<sup>vi</sup> "Nebraska Influenza Surveillance Report 2017-18 Influenza Season, Week 4," Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, February 2018, <http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/documents/report.pdf>.

<sup>vii</sup> Supriya Kumar et al., "Policies to Reduce Influenza in the Workplace: Impact Assessments Using an Agent-Based Model," *American Journal of Public Health* 108, no. 8 (2013):1406-1411, doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2013.301269.

<sup>viii</sup> "Table 32. Leave Benefits: Access, Civilian Workers, March 2017," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Compensation Survey, <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2017/ownership/civilian/table32a.pdf>.

<sup>ix</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>x</sup> "Paid Sick Days: Low Cost, High Reward for Workers, Employers, and Communities," National Partnership for Women & Families, January 2017, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-low-cost-high-reward.pdf>.

<sup>xi</sup> "Paid Sick Days Lead to Cost Savings for All," National Partnership for Women & Families, July 2017, <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/paid-sick-days-lead-to-cost-savings-savings-for-all.pdf>.