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February 20, 2018

Senator Riepe, Chairman – Health and Human Services Committee
Room 1510, Nebraska State Capitol, Lincoln, NE 68509

RE: Support for LR 281CA – Constitutional amendment to state that affordable health care is a right and to expand eligibility under the medical assistance program

Dear Chairman Riepe and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

Healthy children are the foundation of a healthy and prosperous future in Nebraska. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LR 281CA because children benefit when the parents have access to affordable health insurance.

Low-income children in Nebraska are currently eligible for public health insurance programs at a higher income level through Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Still, there are an estimated 14,856 Nebraska children who were likely eligible, but unenrolled in Medicaid or CHIP.ⁱ

A growing body of research suggests that the expansion of Medicaid coverage to low-income adults has a significant spillover effect on the health of children. Studies have shown that in low-income families, parental coverage doubles the odds of a child being insured,ⁱⁱ and that parental coverage has a major influence on continuity of coverage for children.ⁱⁱⁱ

Parental health insurance coverage is also linked to increased access of preventive health services for children. Studies show a strong link between parental Medicaid coverage and well-child visits for low-income children, increasing the likelihood of regular visits to monitor the child’s development by 29 percentage points.^{iv}

Children benefit from having parents who are healthy and financially able to care for their needs. We thank Senator Morfeld for his leadership on this issue and the Committee for their time and consideration. We respectfully urge you to advance LR 281CA. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julia Tse".

Julia Tse, Policy Coordinator

ⁱ 2017 Kids Count in Nebraska Report, Voices for Children in Nebraska, <http://kidscountnebraska.com/health/#healthinsurance>.

ⁱⁱ Jennifer E. DeVoe et al., “Effect of Expanding Medicaid for Parents on Children’s Health Insurance Coverage: Lessons from the Oregon Experiment Randomized Trial,” *JAMA Pediatrics* 169, no. 1 (2015):e143145, doi: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2014.3145.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Jennifer E. DeVoe et al., “Predictors of Children’s Health Insurance Coverage Discontinuity in 1998 Versus 2009: Parental Coverage Continuity Plays a Major Role,” *Maternal Child Health Journal* 19, no. 4 (2015):889-896, doi:10.1007/s10995-014-1590-0.

^{iv} Maya Venkataramani, Craig Evan Pollack, and Eric T. Roberts, “Spillover Effects of Adult Medicaid Expansions on Children’s Use of Preventive Services,” *Pediatrics* 140, no. 6 (2017): e20170953, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2017-0953>.