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January 27, 2019

Senator Wayne, Chairman – Urban Affairs Committee
Room 1510, Nebraska State Capitol, Lincoln, NE 68509

RE: Support for LB 160 – Redefine terms under the Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act to include early childhood infrastructure development and quality early childhood care and education programs for certain cities and villages

Dear Chairman Wayne and Members of the Urban Affairs Committee,

Children are our state’s greatest resource, and we all benefit when every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential in life. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 160 because it would strengthen our investments in tomorrow’s workforce.

Early childhood development research is clear: interventions that start as early as birth show remarkably high returns for each dollar spent. The cognitive and character-building tools provided by early childhood education have even been shown to overcome poor outcomes that are otherwise demonstrated among children in at-risk circumstances.ⁱ

Access to affordable and quality early childhood programs is not just a sound investment in Nebraska’s future—it also supports today’s workforce by allowing more parents to work knowing that their young children are safe and cared for. Significant barriers remain for many Nebraska parents, particularly for families in rural Nebraska. A recent poll showed that many Nebraska parents living in rural and isolated areas were very concerned about shortages in quality child care programs.ⁱⁱ Indeed, 11 Nebraska counties had no licensed child care facilities in 2015, while many more were operating near or over capacity.ⁱⁱⁱ

By allowing economic development programs to include early childhood infrastructure, LB 160 would expand much-needed access to high quality early childhood programs, and allow more communities to make smart investments in their children. We thank Senator Quick for bringing this important issue forward and respectfully urge the committee to advance the bill.

Sincerely,

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

Julia Tse, Policy Coordinator

ⁱ James J. Heckman, “Invest in Early Childhood Development: Reduce Deficits, Strengthen the Economy,” The Heckman Equation, December 2012, available at: https://heckmanequation.org/assets/2013/07/F_HeckmanDeficitPieceCUSTOM-Generic_052714-3-1.pdf.

ⁱⁱ *Urban and Rural Nebraskans Speak About Early Care and Education*, Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska and Gallup, 2017, available at: <https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/-/media/beci/docs/gallup-urban-rural-report-final-3-14-17.pdf?la=en>.

ⁱⁱⁱ *2016 Kids Count in Nebraska Report*, Voices for Children in Nebraska, available at: <http://kidscountnebraska.com/education/#childcare>.