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February 1, 2019

To: Chairman Lathrop and Members of the Judiciary Committee
Warner Chamber, Nebraska State Capitol Lincoln, NE 68509
From: Juliet Summers, Policy Coordinator for Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice
Re: Support for LB 219, to change requirements for foster care transition proposals and provide immunity from liability for caregivers

Dear Chairman Lathrop and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Our child welfare system should ensure that children who have suffered from trauma are supported in growing up with normal adolescent experiences. Youth in foster care often miss out on experiences that are readily accessible to their peers, including employment, extracurriculars, and rites of passage. Voices for Children supports LB 219 because it aims to provide teenagers in foster care with age-appropriate freedoms and the opportunity to share experiences with their peers, creating a sense of normalcy.

Specifically, LB 219 would allow youth in foster care the opportunity to experience a common rite of passage and marker of increased freedom as a teenager: learning to drive. Under current state law and policy, foster youth face barriers to obtaining a learner's permit or driver's license and purchasing a vehicle and insurance. Allowing foster youth to learn to drive and purchase a vehicle will open doors for them to participate more fully in education, employment, and other extracurricular activities. Participation in these activities helps teenagers develop skills necessary to become independent adults and can give them the resources necessary to succeed later in life. LB 219 would remove systemic barriers to driving, while ensuring both teenagers in foster care and foster parents receive appropriate protections related to liability.

We support LB 219 because easing restrictions on vehicle insurance and driver's licenses for foster youth would promote their full participation in extracurricular and social activities enjoyed by their peers and promote a sense of normalcy they deserve. We thank Senator Wishart for bringing this important issue forward and this committee for their time and consideration. We respectfully urge you to advance this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Juliet Summers".